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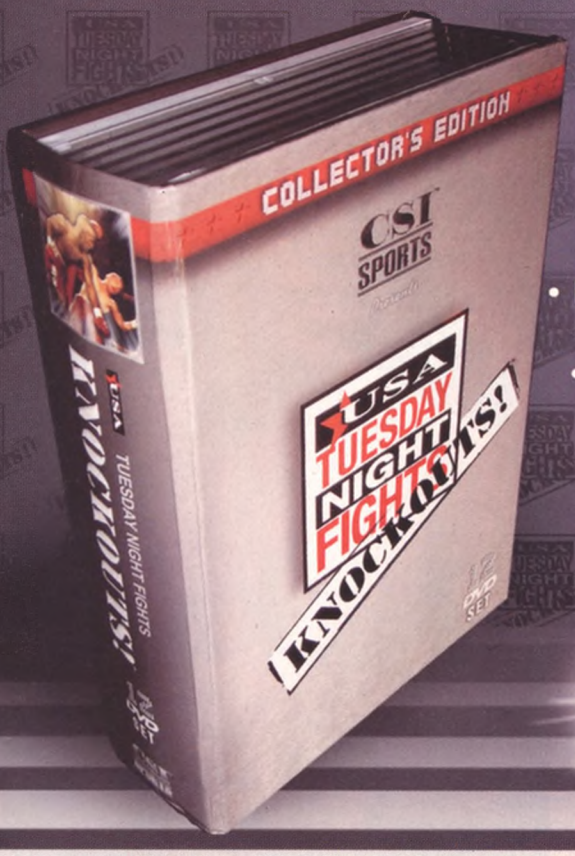

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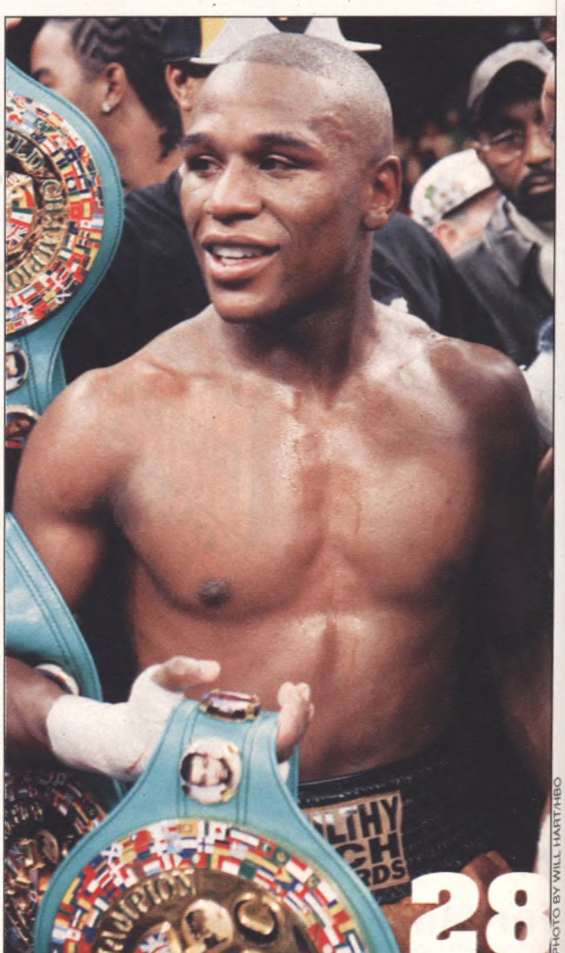

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

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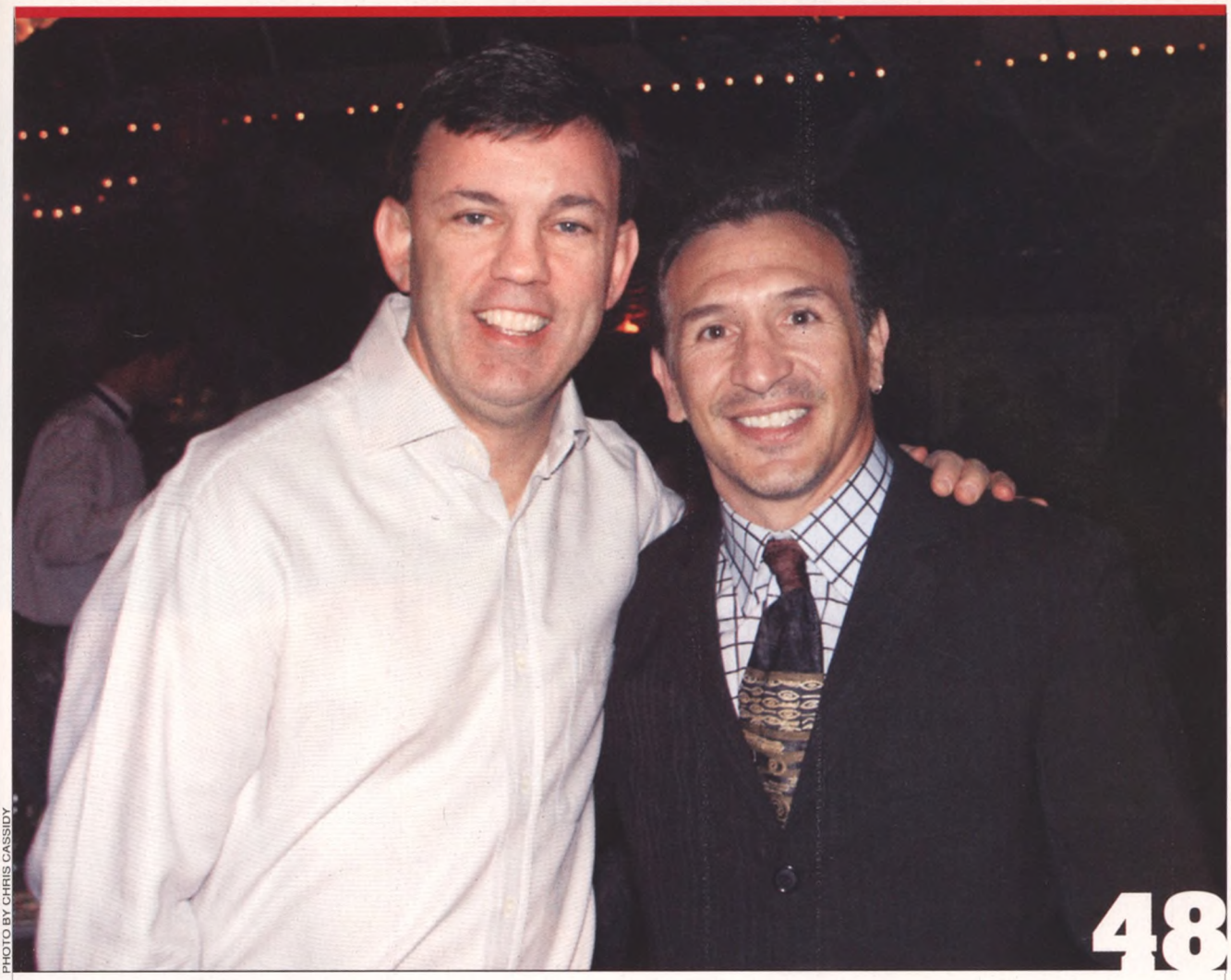

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PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

[Opening Shot]

The height of absurdity ...

When a fighter nearly reaches the rafters on the follow-through of an uppercut, well, you know he's tall. Poor John Ruiz. He drank all of his milk when he was a kid and grew to 6'2". But when he later tries to retaliate against Nikolay Valuev with an uppercut of his own, he can barely reach his shoulders.

Volume 85, No. 4 May 2006

The RING

Now that he's free to seek a boxing license, Joe Mesi is sure to find a jurisdiction willing to give him one. An undefeated, white heavyweight with a charismatic personality is such a sough-after commodity, there's bound to be plenty of buyers regardless of the risk involved.

Mesi—who had been on medical suspension since suffering a brain bleed during his 2004 bout with Vassiliy Jirov—fought just as hard to win the right to fight again as he did in the ring against his 29 pro opponents. Whether or not it turns out to be a personal triumph or a tragedy remains to be seem. But regardless of what happens to Mesi, I fear it will be bad for boxing in general.

Basically, Mesi regained the right to apply for a new license on a technicality: A Nevada judge ruled that because his old license had expired, the commission could no longer suspend him. In other words, you can't suspend something that doesn't exist.

As Dr. Margaret Goodman explains in her column *(page 66)*, the medical ramifications of fighting after suffering a brain bleed could be catastrophic. And if Mesi is seriously hurt in a future bout, there's no doubt boxing will be badly damaged along with him. But what's got me even more worried is the precedent Mesi will set if he fights and does *not* experience further head injuries.

Throughout the long appeals process, a battery of lawyers and doctors testified on Mesi's behalf, but his team was unable to introduce any evidence that a fighter had boxed safely after suffering a brain bleed. All of the documented cases, such as that of Stephan Johnson, indicated the opposite. But if Mesi fights again and somehow escapes unscathed, you can bet that every fighter who suffers a similar injury in the future and wants to keep fighting will invoke Mesi's name. And you thought George Foreman winning the heavyweight title at 45 was the excuse for a lot of stupid behavior.

Whether or not it's boxing's job to protect Mesi from himself is a debatable point that I'm not going to argue here. I do believe, however, that boxing has a right to protect itself. Some would say that this is one of those cases where individual rights should be sacrificed for the greater good, and they might be right.

But nobody represented boxing during the Mesi case. Instead, it was all about him versus the Nevada State Athletic Commission. Wouldn't it be something if Mesi, now that he's won in court and made his point, decided to help the sport he claims to love by not fighting again. He might leave a bigger mark by doing that than anything he could accomplish with his fists.

◆◆◆

A big chunk of this issue is dedicated to "The Year In Pictures," a magazine within a magazine that highlights the best fight photography of 2005. It is the third year in a row we've done this, and response so far has been heartening. It seems that even today, when television and the Internet dominate the media, a lot of fight fans enjoy savoring the unique images that only still photography can produce. There's still something about holding a magazine in your hands and seeing the rich color on the glossy paper that stands apart from viewing electronic images as an enjoyable experience.

Ironically, all the advancements in technology, especially digital photography and the Internet, have enhanced the magazine format tremendously. But nobody will ever invent an artificial device capable of duplicating the eyes and hands of the men and women who took the images. As always, this issue is dedicated to them.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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Reminiscing . . . Livingstone Bramble and Lou Duva share fight stories with Banquet crowd.

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Everlasting . . . Fist cast by Diego Corrales.

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Marvelous . . . Marvin Hagler waves to fans.

Hooray . . . Grand Marshal Ryan O'Neal enjoys fans along Parade route.

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Fight Night . . . Popular boxers featured in action-packed bouts at Turning Stone Resort & Casino.

MUSEUM GROUNDS

Autographs . . . George Foreman spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

5K RACE, FUN RUN

Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

INDUCTION CEREMONY

A Moment in Time . . . Barry McGuigan showing fans his Induction Certificate.

BOXING CARD SHOW

A Collector's Dream . . . Boxing memorabilia for fans. The world's only all-boxing show draws collectors from throughout the world.

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

COCKTAIL PARTY

Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM

Angelo Dundee and actor Russell Crowe tour the museum together.

WORKOUTS

Juan Diaz works the bag mitts during daily public workouts.

RINGSIDE TALKS

Stanley Christodoulou reviews referee rules for the fans.

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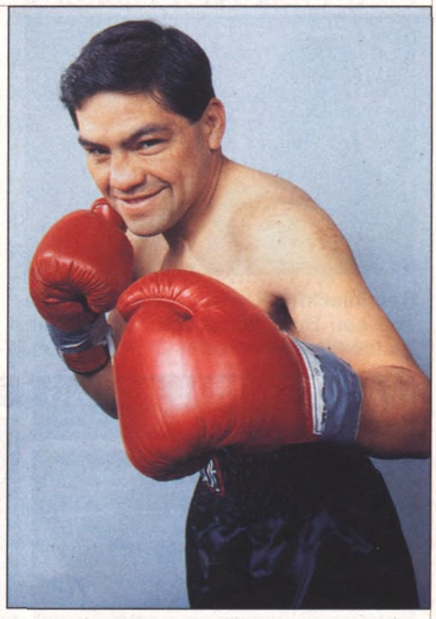
Mighty Mites Head Class Of 2006

We doubt if there will be a renewal of hostilities, but former rivals **Humberto "Chiquita" Gonzalez** and **Michael Carbajal** are destined to be the stars of this year's Induction Weekend (June 8-11) at the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York.

Junior flyweights Gonzalez, 43-3 (31), and Carbajal, 49-4 (33), fought each other three times, with Gonzalez winning twice. Their first fight, in which Carbajal came off the floor to win via seventh-round knockout, was THE RING's 1993 Fight of the Year, and THE RING's Fighter of the Year was Carbajal.

Despite their memorable ring rivalry, Carbajal and Gonzalez are best remembered for proving that 108-pounders could compete for million-dollar purses. Not since the 1920s, when Pancho Villa and Jimmy Wilde packed the Polo Grounds for a flyweight fight, had fighters of this size seized the imagination of the American public. Today, Gonzalez and Carbajal stand as financial benchmarks for fighters below the featherweight division, relatively recent proof that fighters their size can be box-office giants.



"Chiquita" Gonzalez

Sadly, **Edwin "Chapo" Rosario**, the only other fighter elected to the "Modern" category died of an aneurysm at the age of 34, less than three months after his final bout. Rosario, 47-6 (41), held the WBC and WBA lightweight titles at various times during a career that began in 1979. Although he beat top fighters such as Livingstone Bramble, Jose Luis Ramirez, and Howard Davis Jr., Rosario is probably best recalled for almost taking Hector Camacho's head off with a right hand during their 1986 bout at Madison Square Garden. Although Camacho survived and won a controversial decision, the experience transformed him from one of the game's most exciting young talents into a showboating runner, who made a mockery of his "Macho Man" nickname from then on.

Other living inductees are historian **Hank Kaplan** ("Observer" category) and British promoter/manager **Jarvis Astaire** ("No-Participant" category).

Three fighters have been elected to the "Old-Timer" category: welterweight champion and middleweight titleholder **Lou Brouillard**, light heavyweight champion **Jimmy Slattery**, and middleweight titlist **Teddy Yarosz**.

French Canadian Brouillard, 109-29-3 (67), won the 147-pound championship in 1931, lost it in '32, and captured the National Boxing Association (NBA) and New York versions of the middleweight title in '33, which he lost later the same year. His biggest wins came over Young Jack Thompson, Ben Jeby, and Mickey Walker.

Slattery, 110-13 (48) with 2 no-contest, 4 no-decisions, won the vacant NBA 175-pound title in 1926, and lost in '27. He captured the vacant world light heavyweight title in

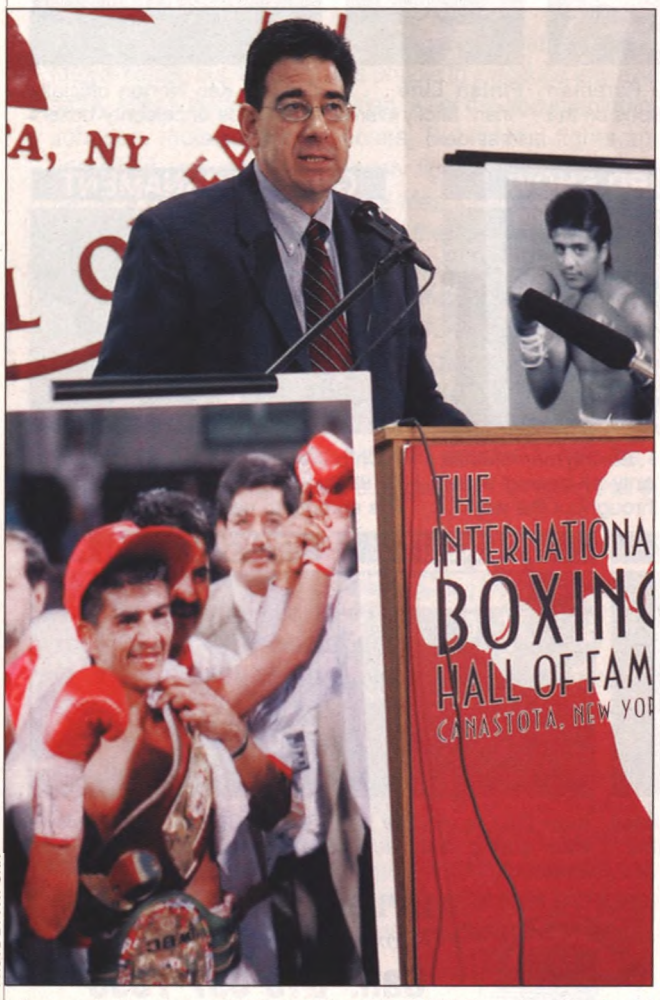
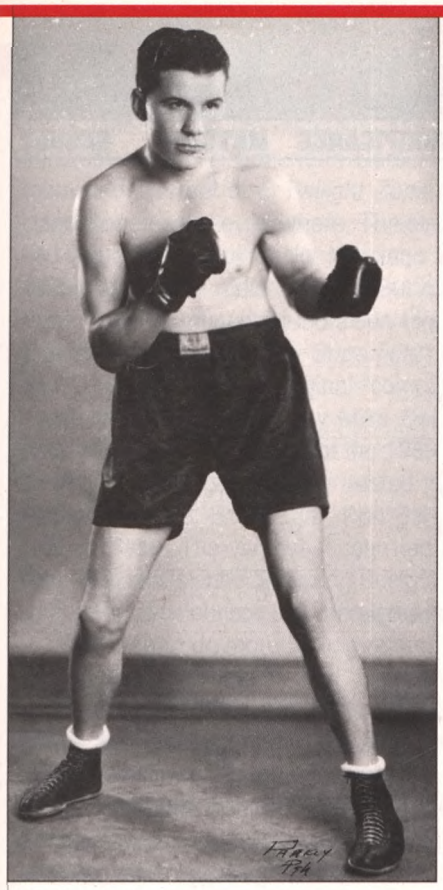


PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Surrounded by photos of Michael Carbajal, IBHOF Executive Director Ed Brophy announces the 2006 inductees



Teddy Yarosz

'30, only to lose it later the same year. The Buffalo, New Yorker went 4-3 in his seven-bout series with fellow Hall of Famer Maxie Rosenbloom

Yarosz, 106-18-3 (16), won the NBA and New York version of the 160-pound title in 1934 and lost it in '35. Despite being a light puncher, the Pittsburgh native beat such outstanding rivals as Vince Dundee, Ben Jeby, Babe Risko, Ken Overlin, Archie Moore, and Billy Conn.

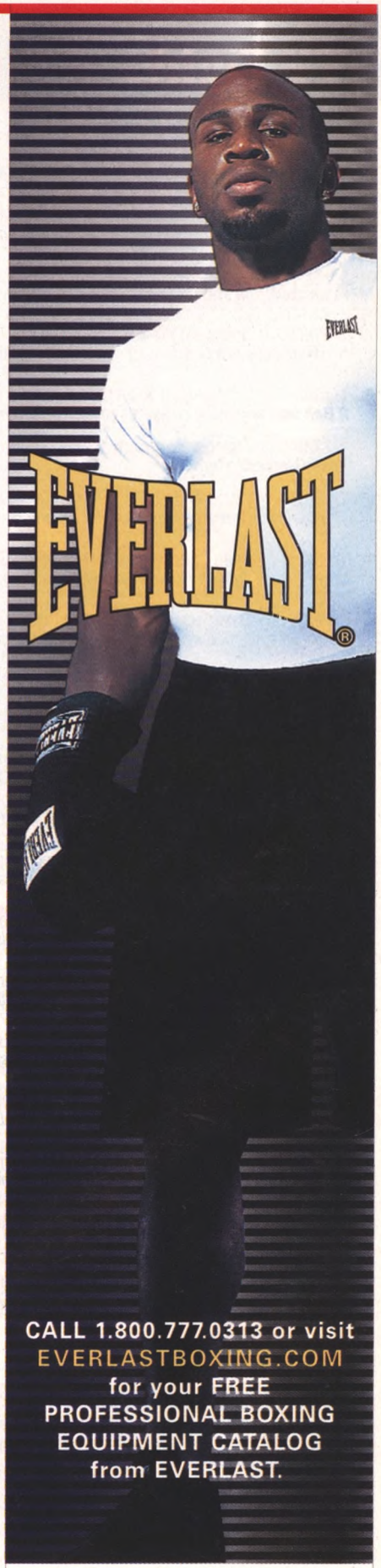
Jem Carney, who won the British lightweight title in 1887, was the only boxer voted into the "Pioneer" category.

Other posthumous inductees are trainer **Whitey Bimstein** and promoter **Rodolfo Sabbatine** in the "Non-Participant" category, and **Stanley Weston**, the former publisher of THE RING, in the "Observer" category.

For more information about Induction Weekend contact the IBHOF at (315) 697-7095, or check out its Web site: www.ibhof.com.

—Nigel Collins

Stanley Weston



TV Fights of the Month

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
1/6/06	Victor Ortiz KO 4 Leroy Fountain	Telefutura	l	C-	B-	C
Ortiz a decent prospect, but he's got a long way to go						
1/6/06	Jose Armando Santa Cruz KO 5 Mike Lozada	Telefutura	l	C+	B	C+
Santa Cruz back in the win column with solid performance here						
1/6/06	Raul Martinez KO 3 Andres Ledesma	Showtime	b	C	A	B-
Not a good sign that Martinez is bleeding already, but the kid can fight all the same						
1/6/06	Joel Julio KO 3 Robert Kamya	Showtime	jm	C+	D+	C+
No doubt Julio is a puncher; let's see what he can do when the other guy is throwing back						
1/7/06	**O'Neil Bell KO 10 Jean-Marc Mormeck**	**Showtime**	**World c**	**A+**	**A**	**B+**
If Bell was any more relaxed in there, they'd have to break out the smelling salts; good for him						
1/7/06	**Carlos Baldomir W 12 Zab Judah**	**Showtime**	**World w**	**A+**	**C**	**C+**
Yeah. Matured. Right.						
1/13/05	Oscar Andrade W 8 Benito Abraham	Telefutura	b	C	D	C-
That's eight in a row without a win for Abraham, who probably should get a different job or a different manager						
1/13/05	Juan Carlos Rubio W 10 Hernan Galaviz	Telefutura	jw	C	D-	C
Staying-busy fight for Rubio in an awful matchup; Galaviz not in the same league						
1/14/05	David Torres KO 2 Rafael Ortiz	TV Azteca	jw	C-	C-	C-
Sure it was stopped a little quickly, but Ortiz' brain cells aren't complaining						
1/14/05	Jorge Solis W 10 Hector Marquez	TV Azteca	f	C+	B	C+
Sometimes it's more fun if you get a little sloppy, as Solis did here; the guy can fight						
1/20/05	J.C. Candelo D 10 Teddy Reid	ESPN2	jm	C	B+	C+
Reid is a seriously flawed fighter, but he's also a genuine bad-ass; you have to give him that						
1/20/05	Valdemir Pereira W 12 Fahproakob Rakkiatgym	ESPN2	f	C+	B-	C
Good job by Pereira, but if you think he's a world champion, you need to have your head examined						
1/20/05	Giovanni Segura KO 1 Juan Carlos Perez	Telefutura	fl	C	C+	C+
Hey, Segura, what fun is it if you don't get hit at all?						
1/20/05	Jose Cotto KO 7 Ubaldo Hernandez	Telefutura	l	C	C+	C+
If you were waiting for Hernandez to cough up his pancreas from those bodyshots, you're not alone						
1/20/05	Israel Hernandez KO 4 Tyrone Harris	Showtime	l	C+	A	B-
Hernandez a heck of a puncher, especially with the left uppercut						
1/20/05	Nonito Donaire W 10 Kahren Harutyunyan	Showtime	jb	C+	A	C+
What must it be like to weigh 115 pounds and actually find someone smaller than you are to fight?						
1/21/05	Juan Manuel Lopez KO 3 Jose Luis Caro	PPV	f	C	C+	C
We will never get tired of one-punch knockouts; Lopez a good-looking prospect						
1/21/05	Jose Luis Zertuche W 12 Mario Primera	PPV	m	C+	D+	D+
Hey, don't be too hard on Primera; at least he showed up						
1/21/05	Martin Castillo W 12 Alexander Muniz	PPV	jb	A-	A	A-
Castillo's stretch drive the difference in excellent fight						
1/21/05	Manny Pacquiao KO 10 Erik Morales	PPV	jl	A	A+	A
Note to Marco Antonio Barrera: NO REYES GLOVES; put it in the contract						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

Ali-Marciano Rivalry Rekindled

As members of the Marciano clan filed into the Sports Museum at the TD Banknorth Garden on January 17, the room had the feel of a *Twilight Zone* episode: Little Marciano clones were everywhere. The strange feeling intensified when images of Rocky Marciano fighting Muhammad Ali swirled onto a movie screen. But it wasn't *The Twilight Zone*; it was a museum fundraiser, highlighted by the New England premiere of *The Superfight: Marciano vs. Ali*, a new DVD featuring the original "computer fight" as well as a one-hour documentary by Mike DeLisa (author of *Cinderella Man*) on the making of the 1969 production.

After the film, guests were treated to a panel discussion featuring DeLisa, Bert Sugar, Ron Borges, and Marciano's brother, Peter. The verbose Sugar had his hands full when edgy local fans started defending Rocky's legacy, but museum curator Richard Johnson considered the night a success.

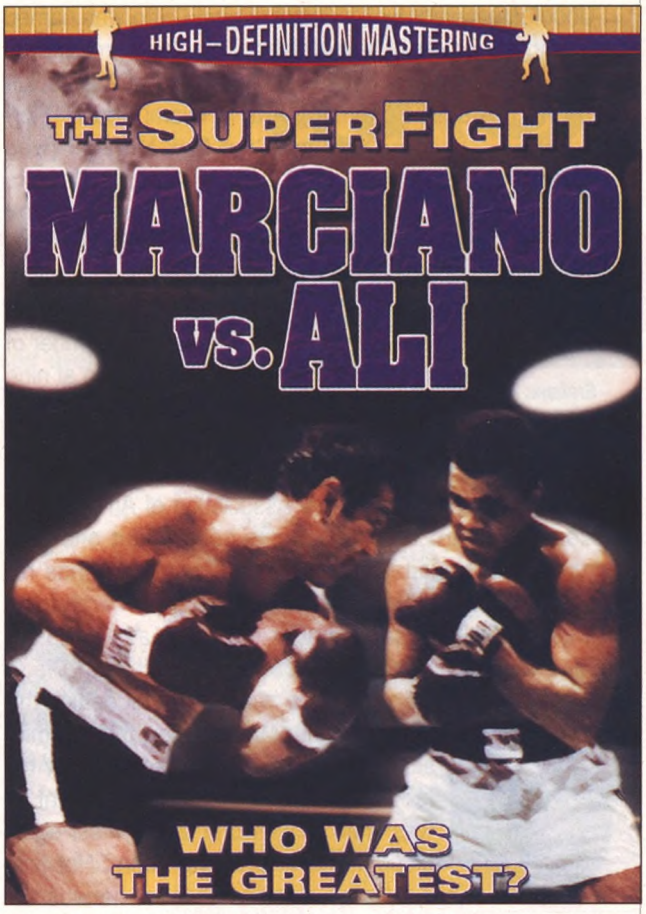
"We hope to do more boxing-related programs because Boston has a rich fight history," said Johnson.

Founded in 1977, The Sports Museum offers youth programs and features more than a half-mile of exhibits. For more info visit www.sportsmuseum.org.

The computer fight still works after 35 years. When Ali dropped Marciano with a right hand, the museum crowd erupted with a heartfelt *"Awwww."* When Rocky got up, the cheers were electric.

But noted trainer Goody Petronelli grumbled on his way out, "I didn't want to say anything, but Rocky would have beat him in five rounds. That guy was made of iron."

—Don Stradley



The debate has been renewed

Fighting Spirit

Have you ever wondered what would happen if you took the stories from *Rocky* and *The Karate Kid*, mixed them together, and made them into a cartoon slightly reminiscent of *Speed Racer*? Me neither, but the results are definitely interesting. That description is pretty much what you get with the animated series *Fighting Spirit*. The series, directed by Satoshi Nishimura and based on a famous Japanese comic strip by Jyoji Morikawa, has been collected and released on DVD by Geneon/Pioneer.

The main character of the series is Ippo Makunouchi, a high school student who is struggling with his social life and being harassed by bullies. This all changes when he meets Takamura, a local boxer, and Ippo begins on the long path of training that will eventually lead him to becoming a professional boxer.

In Volumes 1-3, we get the story of his training leading up to his first actual bout, while Volumes 4-8 focus on his attempt to win a Rookie Championship Tournament, taking you right through the final championship match itself. Each volume is broken down into five easy-to-digest episodes and features some humorous bloopers. The series is recommended for ages 13 and up, due mostly to some odd locker room humor and mild violence.

This is definitely the kind of cartoon you would see on the Cartoon Network's *Adult Swim* program, which has spawned several very popular cartoons with the 18-to-20-something crowd. I was pleasantly surprised by the good storylines, and the nice animation held my attention over the course of eight DVDs. I would recommend this series for anyone from teens to adults looking to see some good-humored cartoons with a lot of heart and plenty of boxing action.

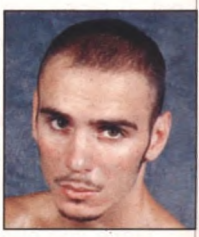
—Jim Malloy

Outside the Ropes

Undefeated junior welterweight **Miguel Cotto** was named Outstanding Boxer of the Year during the third annual *Premios Fox Sports* show, which was held at the Jackie Gleason Theater of Performing Arts in Miami Beach, Florida. Cotto beat out **Erik Morales** (who won in 2003), **Marco Antonio Barrera** (2004's winner), **Diego Corrales**, and **Juan Manuel Marquez** ... Singer **Millie Corretjer**, the wife of **Oscar De La Hoya**, gave birth to a baby boy, **Oscar Gabriel**, on December 29. The newest member of the De La Hoya family weighed in at nine pounds, seven ounces ... **Tim Graham**, who covers boxing for the *Buffalo News* and is an occasional contributor to THE RING, was elected president of the Boxing Writers Association of America. He succeeds **Bernard Fernandez**, who served four one-year terms ... The Nevada State Athletic Commission has revoked the cornerman's license of **Dr. Armando Barak**, who was seen placing his foot under the scale as **Jose Luis Castillo** weighed in for his October 8 rematch with **Diego Corrales**. At a hearing, Barak denied the allegation, but **Marc Ratner**, the commission's executive director, said, "I saw his foot under the scale. It was not flat. It was lifted. It was one of the most egregious things I have ever seen." Not only did Barak lose his license, he was ordered to pay all the hearing costs ... In January, heavyweight **David Tua** had a partial victory in a long-running court battle with former managers **Martin Pugh** and **Kevin Barry** when the High Court in Auckland, New Zealand, found that the boxer had validly cancelled his contract with them in 2003, and that he does not have to pay them any earnings since then. The court now has to decide whether the contract itself was valid, and whether Tua's money paid for renovations on a house owned by Pugh's girlfriend ... Boxing legend **Thomas Hearns** was arrested in early-January after an altercation with his 13-year-old son. According to the Associated Press, police were called to Hearns' home in the Detroit suburb of Southfield, Michigan. When the police arrived, they found the teenager with a small cut and a bruise over one of his eyes. Detective John Harris said Hearns was arrested without incident and jailed until his arraignment, where he was charged with assault and battery and released on $10,000 bond. Southfield Police Chief Joseph Thomas raised questions about whether the boy should also be charged, as he allegedly struck the 47-year-old father first. The Oakland County prosecutor will determine whether Hearns' son will be charged, but Chief Deputy Prosecutor Debrah Carley said a charge is "highly unlikely." If the elder Hearns is convicted, he faces a maximum sentence of up to 93 days in jail ... Additional bad news from Detroit came when the city announced that the **Kronk Gym** was among the nine recreation centers scheduled to be closed due to budget cuts. The 85-year-old Kronk was the breeding ground for many champions and titleholders, including **Milton McCrory**, **Duane Thomas**, **Jimmy Paul**, **Hilmer Kenty**, **Michael Moorer**, and Hearns, all of who were developed by Hall of Fame trainer **Emanuel Steward**. Many have rallied to save the gym, including Steward and Kenty, who became the Kronk's first titlist when he won the WBA lightweight belt in 1980. Kenty was named president of the Emanuel Steward Foundation and will spearhead a drive to raise funds to keep the gym open. As we went to press, a black-tie benefit dinner, which included fights, a fashion show, and an auction, was scheduled for February 2 ... Undefeated middleweight contender **Kelly Pavlik** is facing up to six months in jail after pleading no-contest to punching an off-duty sheriff's deputy, who was moonlighting as a bouncer at a bar in Youngstown, Ohio. According to *The Vindicator*, a Youngstown newspaper, the incident occurred on December 9 as Pavlik and some friends were being escorted from the bar for allegedly being intoxicated. Pavlik was reportedly subdued by pepper spray ... Former lightweight **Vince Marino** died in early-January at the age of 91 in his native San Francisco. Marino was the boyhood friend of **Joe DiMaggio**, and their relationship was chronicled in Richard Cramer's book *The Hero's Life* and the PBS documentary *The American Experience*. Marino, a member of the Northern California Veteran Boxers Association, was also the great-uncle of **Eric Bottjer**, matchmaker for Don King Productions ... **Jack Cruz**, father-in-law and manager of former light heavyweight contender **Yaqui Lopez**, died of heart failure at age 82 in Stockton, California ... The **WBC** presented the family of **Leavander Johnson** a check for $25,000. Johnson died as a result of head injuries suffered in an IBF lightweight title September 19 bout with **Jesus Chavez**.

Graham: New BWAA president

Tua: Wins court case



Pavlik: Pleads no-contest

Quotable

"I admire him. That doesn't mean that I tolerate everything he does, or that I find the means which he uses always good, but I admire him because he keeps this enormous country in order and brings it together, organized and unified."

—WBA heavyweight titleholder Nicolay Valuev, evaluating Russian President Vladimir Putin for fightnews.com

"After the fight, we will party on the plane home. And when we get home, I will work on my suntan."

—James Toney, explaining what he's going to do after his bout with WBC heavyweight titleholder Hasim Rahman

Ratings Analysis

For Period Ended January 18, 2006

Heavyweights: No changes.
Cruiserweights: O'Neil Bell (sixth last issue) takes over as world champion due to his 10th-round knockout of defending champ Jean-Marc Mormeck. Johnny Nelson (third last issue), Carl Thompson (fourth last issue), and Wayne Braithwaite (fifth last issue) move down one slot as Mormeck takes the number-three position.
Light heavyweights: No changes.
Super middleweights: No changes.
Middleweights: No changes.
Junior middleweights: No changes.
Welterweights: Carlos Baldomir entered the ratings last issue at 10 and within one fight shoots to the top as world champion, thanks to his stunning unanimous upset decision over defending champ Zab Judah. Everyone rated number two and below drops one to make room for Judah at two.
Junior welterweights: No changes.
Junior lightweights: No changes.
Featherweights: No changes.
Junior featherweights: No changes.
Bantamweights: No changes.
Junior bantamweights: No changes.
Flyweights: No changes.
Junior flyweights: No changes.
Strawweights: No changes.
Pound-for-pound: Just as quickly as Zab Judah entered the top 10 for the first time in his career, he exits, thanks to his upset decision defeat to Calros Baldomir. Antonio Tarver re-enters the top 10 at number 10, replacing Judah.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Baldomir's upset of Judah created a major shakeup at welterweight

The RING
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Junior Welterweight
2. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
3. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
   Junior Lightweight
4. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
5. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
6. **Erik Morales**
   Junior Lightweight
7. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Featherweight
8. **Rafael Marquez**
   Bantamweight
9. **Jose Luis Castillo**
   Junior Welterweight
10. **Antonio Tarver**
    Light Heavyweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to
TheRing-online.com

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended January 18, 2006

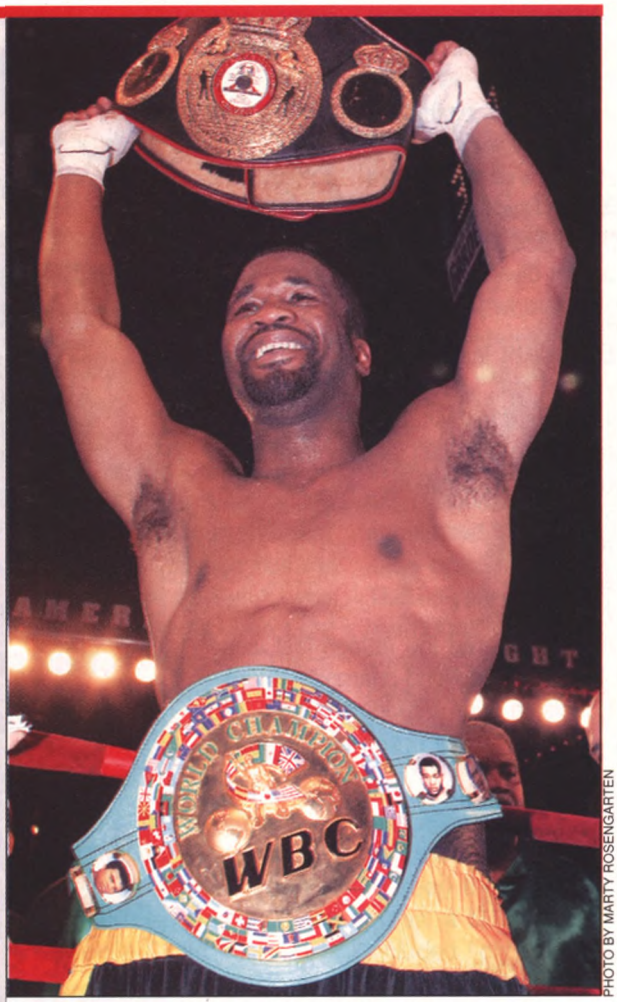


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

O'Neil Bell vaults to the top of the cruiserweight class after knocking out Jean-Marc Mormeck

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI 39-2-1 (20)
2. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD 41-5-1 (33)
3. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 69-4-2 (43)
4. **LAMON BREWSTER** Los Angeles, CA 33-2 (29)
5. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 41-6-1 (28)
6. **MONTE BARRETT** Queens, NY 31-4 (17)
7. **CALVIN BROCK** Charlotte, NC 27-0 (21)
8. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 45-3 (40)
9. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 25-1 (21)
10. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 43-0 (31)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 34-1-1 (21)
2. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 22-2-1 (14)
3. **SERGEI DZINDZIRUK** Germany 31-0 (21)
4. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA 26-2 (22)
5. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-2-1 (31)
6. **DANIEL SANTOS** Puerto Rico 29-3-1 (20
7. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 38-10-1 (20)
8. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO** Spain 59-6 (39)
9. **RODNEY JONES** Lafayette, LA 36-3-1 (22)
10. **ALEJANDRO GARCIA** Mexico 25-1 (24)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 44-2-1 (33)
2. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 30-2-1 (18)
3. **HUMBERTO SOTO** Mexico 38-5-2 (22)
4. **ROCKY JUAREZ** Houston, TX 25-1 (18)
5. **SCOTT HARRISON** Scotland 25-2-2 (14)
6. **VICTOR POLO** Colombia 36-5-3 (26)
7. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 36-0-1 (20)
8. **JOAN GUZMAN** Dominican Republic 24-0 (17)
9. **SPEND ABAZI** Denmark 32-1 (10)
10. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 23-0-1 (17)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 39-3 (29)

1. **MAHYAR MONSHIPOUR** France 28-2-2 (19)
2. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 56-4-1 (36)
3. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 23-2 (16)
4. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGYM** Thailand 24-0 (15)
5. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 27-1 (18)
6. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG** Thailand 43-2-1 (18)
7. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 23-0 (14)
8. **GABULA VABAZA** South Africa 22-0-1 (5)
9. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 22-0 (8)
10. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 27-1 (25)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 35-3 (31)
2. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 19-2 (6)
3. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 50-2-2 (35)
4. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 31-4 (27)
5. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 18-1 (15)
6. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 34-4 (20)
7. **CRUZ CARVAJAL** Mexico 25-13-1 (21)
8. **RICARDO VARGAS** Mexico 39-11-3 (13)
9. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN** Thailand 65-9 (42)
10. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 18-0 (6)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: O'NEIL BELL
Atlanta, GA 26-1-1 (24)

1. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 33-3-2 (26)
2. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 19-0 (10)
3. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
France 31-3 (21)
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
England 45-12-2 (29)
5. **CARL THOMPSON**
England 34-6 (25)
6. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
Guyana 21-2 (17)
7. **DALE BROWN**
Canada 35-4-1 (22)
8. **PIETRO AURINO**
Italy 34-2 (16)
9. **DAVID HAYE**
England 15-1 (15)
10. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 33-1 (26)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ANTONIO TARVER
Orlando, FL 24-3 (18)

1. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 43-10-2 (29)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 23-0 (14)
3. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 49-4 (38)
4. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 38-3-1 (23)
5. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
France 47-2 (31)
6. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 30-0 (21)
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 39-3 (23)
8. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 24-2 (18)
9. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 25-2 (13)
10. **ERIC HARDING**
West Hartford, CT 23-3-1 (7)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
Wales 40-0 (31)
2. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 37-0 (28)
3. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 21-0 (17)
4. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 33-2 (12)
5. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 25-3 (20)
6. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 21-2 (19)
7. **MANNY SIACA**
Puerto Rico 20-5 (18)
8. **OTIS GRANT**
Canada 38-2-1 (17)
9. **ROBIN REID**
England 38-5-1 (27)
10. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 22-0 (16)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 25-0 (17)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 50-3 (25)
2. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 46-4-1 (32)
3. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 19-0 (17)
4. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 24-1 (11)
5. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
England 40-3 (35)
6. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 31-8 (12)
7. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 20-1 (8)
8. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
Canada 23-2 (13)
9. **SCOTT DANN**
England 23-2 (16)
10. **KELLY PAVLIK**
Youngstown, OH 27-0 (24)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: CARLOS BALDOMIR
Argentina 42-9-6 (12)

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 32-4 (23)
2. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 34-3 (25)
3. **CORY SPINKS**
St. Louis, MO 34-3 (11)
4. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 41-4 (35)
5. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 26-1 (12)
6. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
Denmark 37-0 (27)
7. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 25-1 (23)
8. **JOSE ANTONIO RIVERA**
Worcester, MA 37-4-1(24)
9. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 36-3 (11)
10. **DAVID ESTRADA**
Chicago, IL 18-2 (9)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 40-0 (30)

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
Grand Rapids, MI 35-0 (24)
2. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 25-0 (21)
3. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
Australia 31-2 (25)
4. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 53-7-1 (47)
5. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 33-1-2 (19)
6. **CARLOS MAUSSA**
Colombia 19-3 (16)
7. **ARTURO GATTI**
Jersey City, NJ 39-7 (30)
8. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 25-2-1 (17)
9. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
Washington, D.C. 31-4-1 (17)
10. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 40-8-1 (26)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: DIEGO CORRALES
Las Vegas, NV 40-3 (33)

1. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Miami, FL 31-3-1 (19)
2. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 35-3-1 (27)
3. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 28-0 (14)
4. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 32-3 (24)
5. **ACELINO FREITAS**
Brazil 37-1 (32)
6. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 27-1 (16)
7. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 42-3 (29)
8. **ISAAC HLATSHWAYO**
South Africa 22-0 (9)
9. **LAVKA SIM**
Mongolia 21-4-1 (18)
10. **RICKY QUILES**
Puerto Rico 38-6-3 (8)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 61-4 (42)
2. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-3 (34)
3. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 40-3-2 (31)
4. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 22-1-1 (11)
5. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 45-3-1 (36)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 45-2-1 (32)
7. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
Bellflower, CA 41-6-1 (24)
8. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 21-1 (17)
9. **ROBBIE PEDEN**
Australia 25-3 (14)
10. **JANOS NAGY**
Hungary 23-0 (14)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 29-1 (16)
2. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
North Korea 31-3-1 (8)
3. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 23-1 (15)
4. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 32-1-1 (24)
5. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 28-1 (26)
6. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 29-4 (19)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 23-1 (10)
8. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
South Africa 26-3 (17)
9. **GERRY PENALOSA**
Philippines 49-5-2 (33)
10. **MBWANA MATUMLA**
Tanzania 15-1 (9)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 59-2 (31)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
Venezuela 27-0 (17)
3. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 24-0 (19)
4. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 42-3-1 (32)
5. **IRENE PACHECO**
Colombia 30-1 (23)
6. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 19-0-2 (13)
7. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
Nicaragua 36-2-2 (23)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 19-1 (7)
9. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 24-3-1 (10)
10. **VICTOR BURGOS**
Mexico 38-14-3 (22)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 21-1 (17)
2. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 22-3-1 (16)
3. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 22-2-2 (13)
4. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 20-1 (15)
5. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 18-0 (12)
6. **WILL GRIGSBY**
St. Paul, MN 18-4-1 (11)
7. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 33-4-1 (20)
8. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
Colombia 35-4 (21)
9. **NABUAKI MASUDA**
Japan 21-3 (3)
10. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 21-5 (12)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 19-1-3 (8)
2. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 50-7-4 (22)
3. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 24-0 (5)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 15-1 (6)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 15-2 (7)
6. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
Mexico 24-7-3 (13)
7. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 19-3-1 (16)
8. **OMAR SOTO**
Mexico 14-2-1 (10)
9. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 35-4-1 (30)
10. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 21-0 (16)

By Jeff Ryan

Split Screen

The first step toward getting help for your addiction is realizing that you have a problem and admitting that you're powerless to do anything about it on your own. If that doesn't work, an intervention might be necessary. Well, one of these days, my family and friends are no doubt going to show up when least expected, toss me into the back of a station wagon, and cart me off to some rehab center on a leafy mountaintop.

My problem is an addiction to lists. That's right. Lists. Can't read enough of them, can't come up with enough of them on my own. Ask me what my favorite movie of all-time is, and you'll get a list of my top 25—in order. Not to mention another list of the top films featuring an explosion, a list of the top flicks that include a redheaded actress in a supporting role, and a ranking of the top theater popcorns in Northwestern Queens.

Let's face it: Lists are pure, light-hearted, nobody-loses-an-eye fun. That's why two programs that recently aired on the tube, the TV Land miniseries, *The 100 Most Unexpected TV Moments*, and the syndicated *Greatest Sports Legends: 50 Greatest Sports Moments* had me transfixed. Interestingly, boxing played a prominent role on both shows. And not surprisingly, the full-time sports programmers got things right, while the mainstream entertainment outlet showed that it didn't know what it was talking about.

Let's start with the good. *Greatest Sports Legends* gave boxing two prominent spots on its list, ranking 1985's Marvin Hagler-Thomas Hearns war the 16th-best sports moment ever and the Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier trilogy the sixth best. Though not a particularly high-quality production, the *GSL* special did air actual film of Hagler-Hearns, not the still photos that are usually a part

The Ali-Frazier trilogy placed sixth on the* Greatest Sports Legends *all-time list

Should we have been "surprised" when Tyson bit Holyfield (inset) and then totally freaked out?

of TV discussions of that fight. And while the selections may have been debatable in regard to their placement, no one who knows the game could argue that they didn't belong on the list.

The same can't be said about the TV Land offering. While Ali's surprise torch lighting at the Atlanta Olympics in 1996 placed 13th, TV Land's choice for the second most unexpected moment *in television history* was baffling. That, believe it or not, was Mike Tyson's ear bite of Evander Holyfield in their 1997 rematch. It placed second only to the famous finale of *Newhart*, during which *The Bob Newhart Show's* Bob Hartley woke up next to his wife, Emily, in their Chicago apartment and realized that the entire life he'd led as a New England innkeeper had all been just a dream.

(Note: TV Land's producers explained that they wanted to make their show viewer-friendly, thus events like 9-11, the Kennedy assassination, etc. were left off. Things like Janet Jackson's "wardrobe malfunction," Keith Moon's drum set exploding during The Who's appearance on *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, and Monica and Chandler getting horizon-

Fan Man falls into the press section after bouncing off the ring ropes

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Personal Perceptions:

The last word on everything from voters who opened their eyes to a dynamo who risks getting his closed:

•For some reason (probably because he's still alive and speaks English), Michael Carbajal got far more attention for getting voted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame than either of his contemporaries, Humberto Gonzalez (who won two of three meetings with Carbajal) or the late Edwin Rosario. For me, though, the big news was the long overdue recognition for former lightweight and junior welterweight king Rosario. "El Chapo" was one of the most exciting TV performers of the '80s, he never ducked a big name, and his right hand was a work of art worthy of its own display case. It's too bad he's not here to make his speech and acknowledge the applause.

•Golfer Jean Van de Velde says he'll enter the Women's British Open in August to protest the decision to allow women to qualify for the men's version of that prestigious tournament. Geez, if we could only get someone with a similar attitude to take on Laila Ali, the old girl might finally get tested.

•Former heavyweight challenger Axel Schulz, inactive since 1999, is considering a comeback at the age of 37. How this escaped mention on *Nightline* and *Larry King Live* is a mystery to me.

•By dropping a surprise decision to Carlos Baldomir, Zab Judah blew a $3-million payday for a superfight with Floyd Mayweather. That's the bad news. The good news is that Judah didn't toss a chair at the guys who marked the scorecards. But did you hear Judah's conspiracy theory about how Don King jobbed him out of his welterweight title? The ex-champ stopped just short of accusing King of being the mysterious fourth judge on the grassy knoll.

Rosario's election long overdue

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Hopkins will have to change outfits if he gets HBO gig

•Wasn't the time for a Bernard Hopkins-Roy Jones rematch during that stretch when they were the two best combatants in the game? It sure isn't now, when they have eight losses between them.

•Zahir Raheem upset Erik Morales in September and *still* hasn't been rewarded.

•Hasim Rahman was *given* the WBC heavyweight crown when Vitali Klitschko retired, and a positive steroid test resulted in James Toney being stripped of his WBA belt following a bout that he won against John Ruiz. So the Rahman-Toney clash is actually a pairing of a paper champion and a paper ex-champion.

•It's good to learn that Hopkins cut an audition tape for HBO in the hope of landing an analyst job. But does he really need to audition? "The Executioner" could make a conversation about instant coffee entertaining.

•Ricky Hatton should scrap this idea of fighting two tune-ups in the U.S. before taking on Mayweather. For starters, that would probably push the bout back to next winter. Worse, it would threaten Hatton's already delicate eyebrows. Because of his style and skin, Hatton has a good chance of getting cut *any* time he enters a ring. It would be a shame to see an accumulation of more scar tissue further delay the Mayweather fight or even determine its outcome. Hatton's probably as good as he's ever going to be, so the time to strike is now.

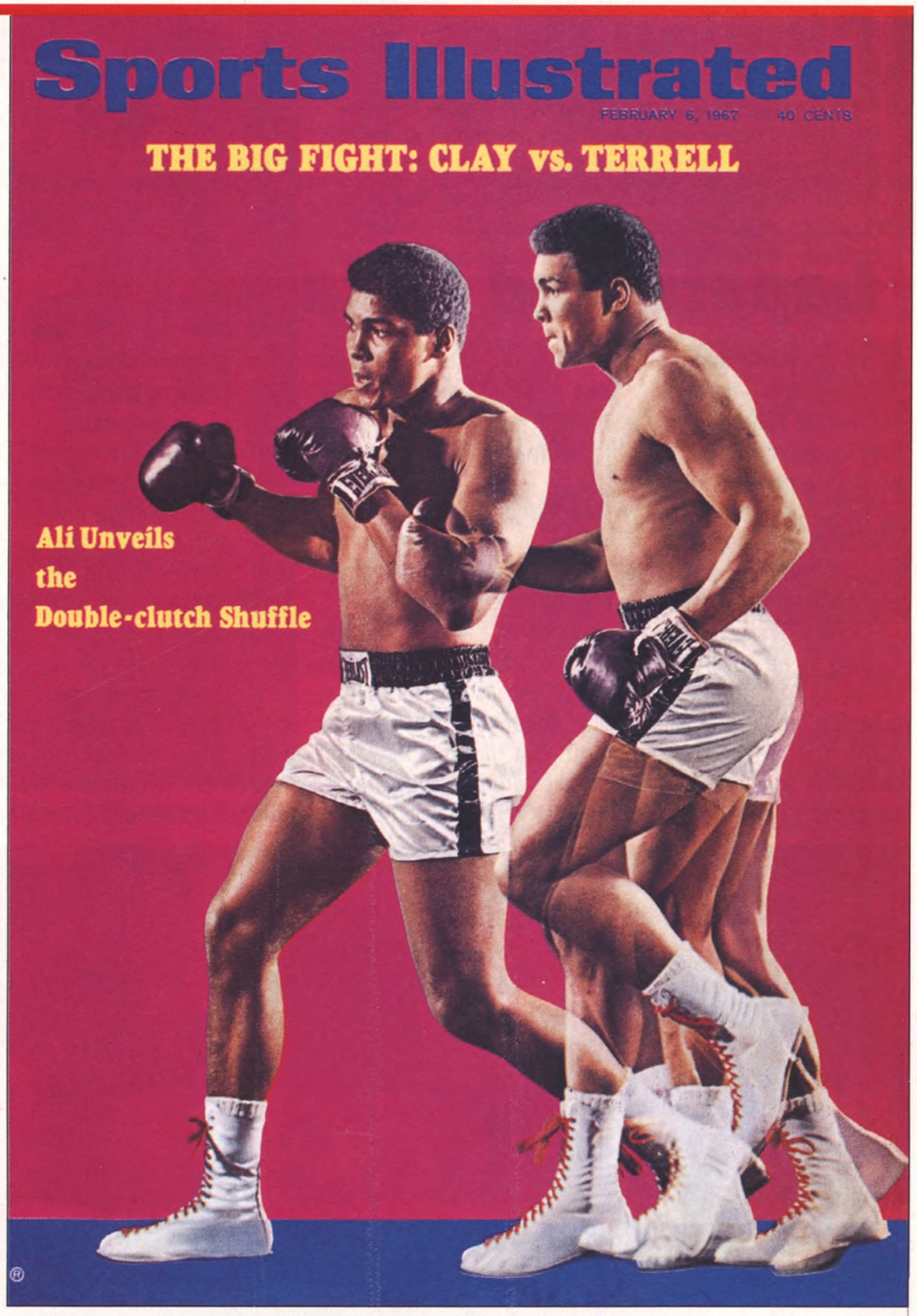
tal on *Friends* did make the cut.) To say Tyson's cannibalism was a curious selection for the second spot is putting it mildly. With his track record for anti-social behavior (he'd already served prison time for rape) and history of illegal ring tactics, Tyson's bite, while surprising, certainly wasn't the second-biggest stunner in the history of the medium.

It wasn't even the most unexpected *boxing* moment in TV history. Better candidates would have been "Fan Man" parachuting into the middle of a heavyweight championship bout, the Andrew Golota-Riddick Bowe riot, Ali

and Frazier brawling on the ABC studio floor, or Ken Norton upsetting Ali and breaking his jaw. One other thing: All of the other 99 moments on the list unfolded on either network TV or cable. It's strange to include a moment from pay-per-view, which is really more like a closed-circuit theater telecast beamed into the home than it is a traditional TV sports event.

As is usually the case when people who have only a passing interest in, and knowledge of, boxing try to write about it, talk about it, or feature it in some way, the folks at TV Land got it wrong. In the future, if they promise not to insult the intelligence of the fight fans watching the way they did with their silly list, we boxing columnists promise not to rate the 10 greatest game shows, *M*A*S*H* episodes, or Katie Couric hairdos.

Mag Drag: Speaking of lists, it's no mystery why the Sweet Science never ranks very high on the list of favorite sports in the minds of the editors at *ESPN The Magazine*. Ironically, it's because boxing, the supposed red-light district of the sports world, doesn't feature enough high profile, posturing thugs who can cross their tattooed arms, tilt back their heads, and fire off a glare that makes you fear they can menace your momma just as fast as they can sink a three-pointer or run off-tackle.



Sports Illustrated ***boxing coverage sure isn't what it used to be***

Sports Illustrated, on the other hand, once thought very highly of the fight game. During much of my life, picking up a copy of the magazine in the days following a major bout was a vital part of the overall experience. *(What's the SI angle going to be? How the heck did that SI reporter get into a dressing room supposedly impenetrable by the press? And who took that incredible lead photo of the head snapping and the saliva flying?)* Rarely did the magazine disappoint.

Sadly, *SI* disappoints a lot these days. In recent years, it has come to view boxing as something to be tolerated more than fertile terrain to be explored. Fights that would have warranted a feature story a decade ago because of their importance and subplots (Jose Luis Castillo-Diego Corrales II, for instance) get covered only as a "Scorecard" item or a mini-article. Incredibly, in its 25-page, year-end review of the world of sports, *SI* devoted just four paragraphs to boxing.

That was a recap of Castillo-Corrales I, and it came, predictably, with a tone that suggested boxing produced a great fight and a memorable night in spite of itself. ■

By Ivan Goldman

Lepers And Losers

It's no secret that managers keep two lists of potential opponents—those they want to avoid and those they want to fight. So I've made lists of my own. I don't claim they're definitive. You might legitimately contend some worthy candidate was left out.

First, the lepers, the typhoid Marys no one will fight unless they're desperate, by order of descending weight class. When the opening bell rings, managers prefer not to see these fighters across the ring from their investment.

Winky Wright: Renders opponents helpless and befuddled as he covers up like a turtle and flicks his vicious, practically unstoppable southpaw jab. It scores points, busts up faces, and little by little destroys the opponent's plans and maybe the opponent. But this middleweight craftsman who spent so much of his career outside the circle of fame has a boring style that hurts his drawing power. So managers figure, why return that call? Eventually, one of them will be glad he did. Winky's 34 and may start showing his age at any time.

Floyd Mayweather: To some extent Mayweather, who's changed to a more ferocious, crowd-pleasing style, does attract loot at the gate, mostly because, despite his inclination to bite the hand that feeds him, HBO still loves and believes in him. As his victories pile up, it's hard to argue with the network's view.

To potential opponents, Mayweather's gruesome annihilation last year of the famously rugged Arturo Gatti looked like a horror movie. If you can't even get in one punch, who needs it? Besides which, the guy is still improving.

Antonio Margarito: A dangerous dude who can take a shot and knock 'em flat, he owns the WBO title. So if another welter can lay his hands on a belt from a rival al-

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Wright's southpaw jab is practically unstoppable

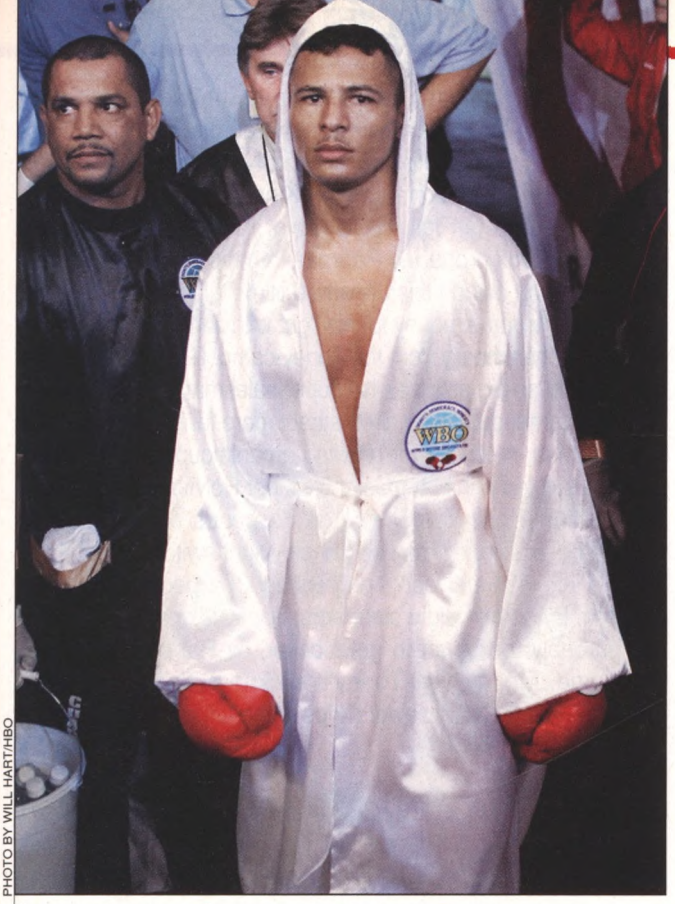


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Will Torres' strong showing against Cotto scare off future foes?

phabet gang, presto, he's no longer a WBO contender and nobody can make him fight Margarito. The alphabets' practice of eliminating other champions from lists of contenders is a wrecking ball used to destroy attractive matches and reason enough to kill their anti-boxing system. But that's another story. Mayweather-Margarito is obviously a dream match, and one of them—I'd guess Mayweather—has been dodging it. I base this on rumor, instinct, and chicken entrails.

Ricardo Torres: A newcomer to the world stage, this junior welter sent shock waves through the division when he nearly kayoed Miguel Cotto. He's a Colombian, which means he has no fans to speak of. He also throws super-fast punches that land like bricks.

Miguel Cotto: In their unbelievable slugfest last September, Torres proved Cotto could be hit and even stunned. But unless you drop a refrigerator on his head, it doesn't seem to matter. Like Dracula, he recuperates. Cotto, like Ricky Hatton, has fans, so people who lose to him can earn while they learn. That makes him less shunned than others on the list. Besides, there are so many formidable junior welters, when you avoid one nightmare, you end up with another.

Zahir Raheem: This smallish African-American lightweight with talent and no fans is so invisible, even his promoter, Bob Arum, doesn't see him. Raheem ought to picket the Census Bureau until somebody acknowledges his existence.

Rafael Marquez: A 118-pounder who hits like a junior welter, he has hands of titanium, boxes decently, and, like Mayweather and Wright, is superbly conditioned. He's been making the same weight since he turned pro 11 years ago. If Marquez finally goes up to junior featherweight, watch the 122-pounders scramble up to 126.

Guys Everyone Wants To Fight: This list is even more likely to be incomplete because there are so many beatable fighters—all the heavyweights, for instance. I'll just name two favored targets of this, the sorriest of divisions: **Jameel McCline** and **Wladimir Klitschko.** Jameel is getting old, still has a name that means something, and still loses the big ones. Wladimir has a chin like fine crockery and makes an impressive sound when he hits the canvas.

Light heavy **Julio Gonzalez:** Very tough with a nice fan base, but leads with his nose. He doesn't see punches any better than Mister Magoo can drive.

Fernando Vargas: A 29-year-old junior middleweight with lots of fans and the vertebrae of a senior citizen. As I write this, he's preparing for Shane Mosley. If he can move across the ring without folding over in pain, he might have a chance.

Carlos Baldomir: A journeyman with THE RING wel-

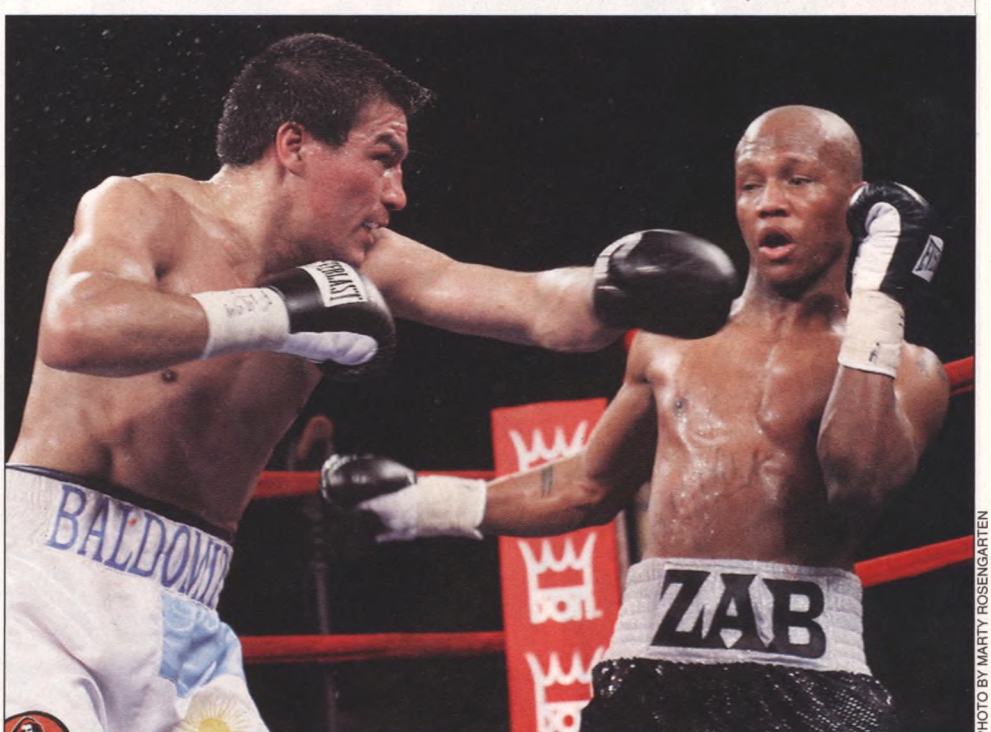


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Suddenly, damn near everybody wants to fight Baldomir

terweight championship, nine losses, and limited power, making him a target for everyone within 15 pounds.

Arturo Gatti: He cuts, he bruises, and he's fought more wars than Napoleon. Best of all, he still fills up venues.

Still 30 furlongs in the lead of this group is **Oscar De La Hoya.** Even as newer rust cakes over his old rust, Oscar's teenybopper fan base remains in place. The man had no fights in 2005. The previous year he had all of two—the knockout loss to Bernard Hopkins, preceded by the gift decision over Felix Sturm, who was robbed with the in-your-face, matter-of-fact professionalism only Las Vegas can provide.

Oscar claims to be a welterweight, but only his scale knows for sure. As he pursues his expanding businesses, it gets harder and harder for him to climb out of his silk pajamas to lace on a pair of gloves. He's the most distracted fighter since Riddick Bowe and Evander Holyfield watched "Fan Man" land next to them in 1993.

Apparently the honor of taking on the exceedingly uncommitted De La Hoya will go to the increasingly incapable Ricardo Mayorga in May. This is more of a *People* magazine fight than a fan's fight.

Rahman's Prize: When Vitali Klitschko retired, WBC chieftain Jose Sulaiman dropped his WBC belt in the lap of Hasim Rahman, maybe figuring he was doing yet another favor for his long-time benefactor Don King. But after Rahman declared bankruptcy, a Nevada judge let him walk away from his contract with King, and, horror of horrors, Sulaiman's gift fell in the lap of King archrival Arum, who quickly took orphaned Rahman into his Top Rank arms.

Because he owned this unearned title, Rahman claimed 60 percent of the purse money for his fight with James Toney, fueling white-hot animosity from the Toney camp. Glib, trash-talking Toney is not as big a star as his super-salesman promoter Dan Goossen contends, but he does attract more fans than hot-and-cold Rahman, notorious for growing a cantaloupe on his head when he tangled with butt-master Evander Holyfield.

As another grievous Dark Age descends on the heavyweight division, Toney may be the only light switch. But at age 37, how long can that last? Long enough, I expect, to decision Rahman. By heavyweight standards, Toney is one quick dude, and probably too smart to get clocked by Rahman's deadly right hand. Meanwhile, Toney's slickness and Rahman's Sunday punch will chill viewers' trips to the refrigerator.

Gomez Setbacks: Ex-cruiserweight power Juan Carlos Gomez, the Cuban refugee who looked for a while like a serious heavyweight threat, tested positive for cocaine after decisioning Oliver McCall in Germany.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Goldman likes Toney over Rahman

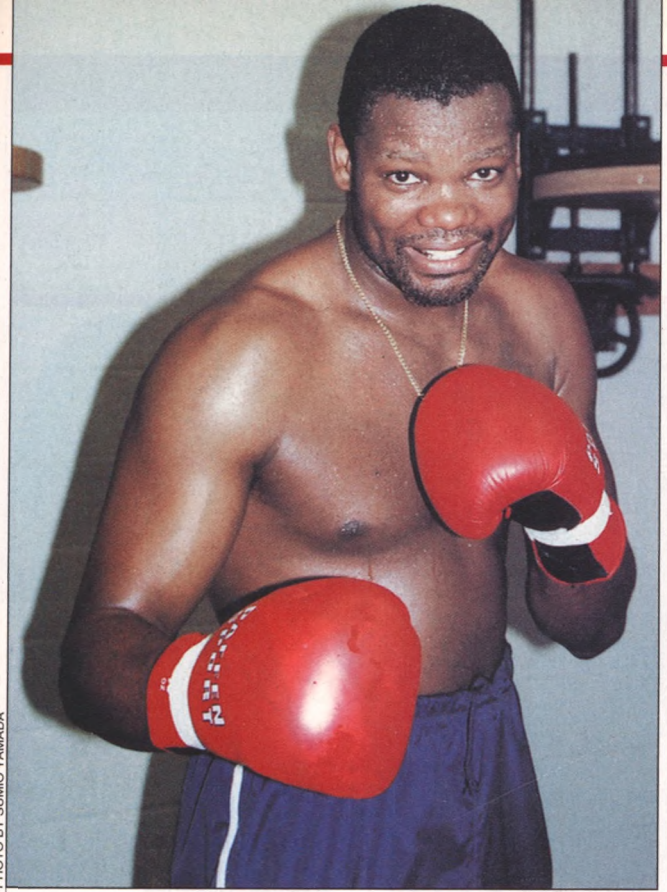


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Gomez is having trouble getting his career in gear

Gomez, hinting someone over there was out to get him, was pronounced clean weeks later by an apparently bona fide test he took on his own. He's looking at a possible two-year suspension, which is nuts. Toney got three months for steroids, which are way more performance enhancing than cocaine.

Gomez' career took its first serious tumble in 2004 when Yanqui Diaz, looking more surprised than Gomez, stopped him in the first round. Now a little background:

For several weeks before the Diaz disaster, Gomez trained at Boxing Works in Hermosa Beach, California, where I fumble through workouts of my own. He sparred day after day with the same hired hand, and day after day landed a good 75 percent of his punches. You didn't have to be the second coming of Whitey Bimstein to know Gomez was headed for trouble. The first rule of boxing—protect yourself at all times—means more than just keeping your gloves up. It also means never feel safe in there. An ineffective sparring partner you've completely solved makes you feel bulletproof. Always an unwarranted assumption.

Magoo 1: To me. An Associated Press story picked up worldwide stated that only hours after Leavander Johnson was mortally injured in his fight against Jesus Chavez, HBO hosted a poolside party at the MGM Grand. The story was terribly wrong. There was a party, but HBO had nothing to do with it. I used the false report, which I mistakenly thought originated with *The Los Angeles Times*, as a springboard to jump all over the network. HBO executives were in fact extraordinarily generous and kind to the Johnson family. They have my heartfelt apology.

Magoo 2: For years supporters claimed if Zab Judah had been allowed to continue after falling down twice from the same Kotsya Tszyu punch in 2001, he would have come back to win. Baldomir, with one right hand in round seven, showed the fallacy of that argument. Not only did Judah never fully recover, he turned his back, ran, showboated, and in his hideous rant after the fight, reminded us again all there is to dislike about him.

Futch Awards: Too often fights are scored the way experts predict instead of the way they transpire. But New York judges Melvina Latham and Julie Lederman and Italian judge Guido Cavelleri had the integrity and fortitude to call it for Baldomir over prohibitive local favorite Judah, whose promoter, King, has more clout per square inch than anyone in the business.

Baldomir gets an award too. Don't you just love it when a journeyman turns the tables on the whole world? ■

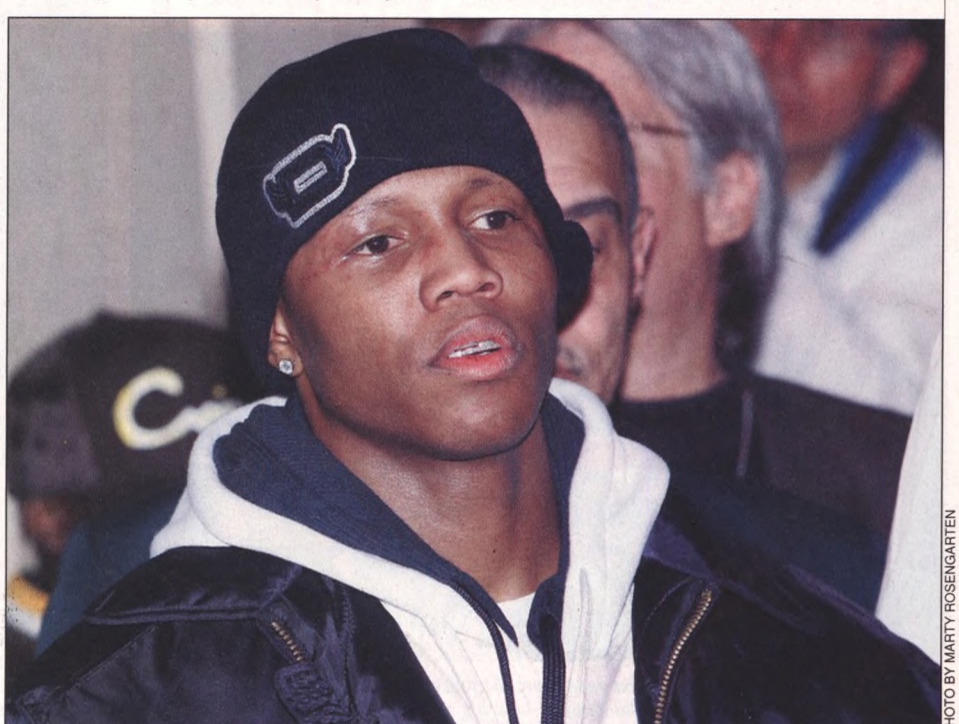


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Baldomir bout highlighted Judah's many faults

Camera Clicks

PHOTO BY MARCUS BRANDT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The left jab still looks technically solid, but Muhammad Ali's aim ain't what it used to be, as he appears to be missing Don King by a good two feet. (We are safe in presuming DK was the intended target, right?) Ali, King, and Ali's wife, Lonnie, were all in attendance in Berlin, Germany, for a fight card last December featuring the former heavyweight champ's daughter, Laila Ali.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Everything was going swimmingly for Jean-Marc Mormeck ... until he was presented with his Ring *belt by Managing Editor Joe Santoliquito, and it's been all downhill since. If Mormeck's looking for a safe comeback opponent after his loss to O'Neil Bell, well, let's just say there's a 5'5" man in this picture who appears to be inching closer and closer to cruiserweight status.*

PHOTO BY JOHN DISANTO

The Web site PhillyBoxingHistory.com has established a program designed to raise funds for one gravestone a year for a different Philadelphia boxing personality, and the first one was placed last December at Eden Cemetery in Collingdale, Pennsylvania, for former 130-pound contender Tyrone Everett. Everett died in 1977 at the age of 24, just six months after losing a hotly debated decision to Alfredo Escalera in a WBC title challenge. Those are Tyrone's brothers, Mike (left) and Eddie—both of whom were pro fighters as well—flanking the boys' mother, Doris.

PHOTO BY OLIVER LANG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

"You must be this tall to ride." Apparently both of these ladies make the cut, standing within about a foot-and-a-half of the height of 7' heavyweight Nicolay Valuev. Does size really matter? Apparently it does to the judges in Germany, who've helped Valuev to two consecutive controversial decision wins, over Larry Donald and John Ruiz.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Apparently there are cuisine options in Hamburg besides just the sandwich named after the city. Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko, neither of whom have to ever worry about making weight, check out a plate of goodies with Minas Mukas, the owner of Hamburg's Restaurant Minas. No truth to the rumor that Vitali suffered a devastating knee injury attempting to climb down from the chair he's on.

PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN FISCHER/GETTY IMAGES

It's hard to look much less like a "Baby Doll" than Elena Reid does in this picture. "Raging Doll" perhaps. Or even "Rosemary's Baby Doll." But not "Baby Doll." Looking a little bit less pretty than usual, Reid battled through the blood during her December flyweight bout with Regina Halmich, which ended in a controversial decision loss for the talented but hard-luck Reid.

Nostalgia Corner

Batter up: If these guys look familiar but out of place, that's because none of them ever played ball for the Houston Astros. They did, however, fight at the Astrodome on August 5, 1967, in a WBA heavyweight elimination tournament. Jimmy Ellis (far left) won a 12-round decision over Thad Spencer (third from left), and Ernie Terrell (far right) stopped Leotis Martin (second from left) in the ninth round.

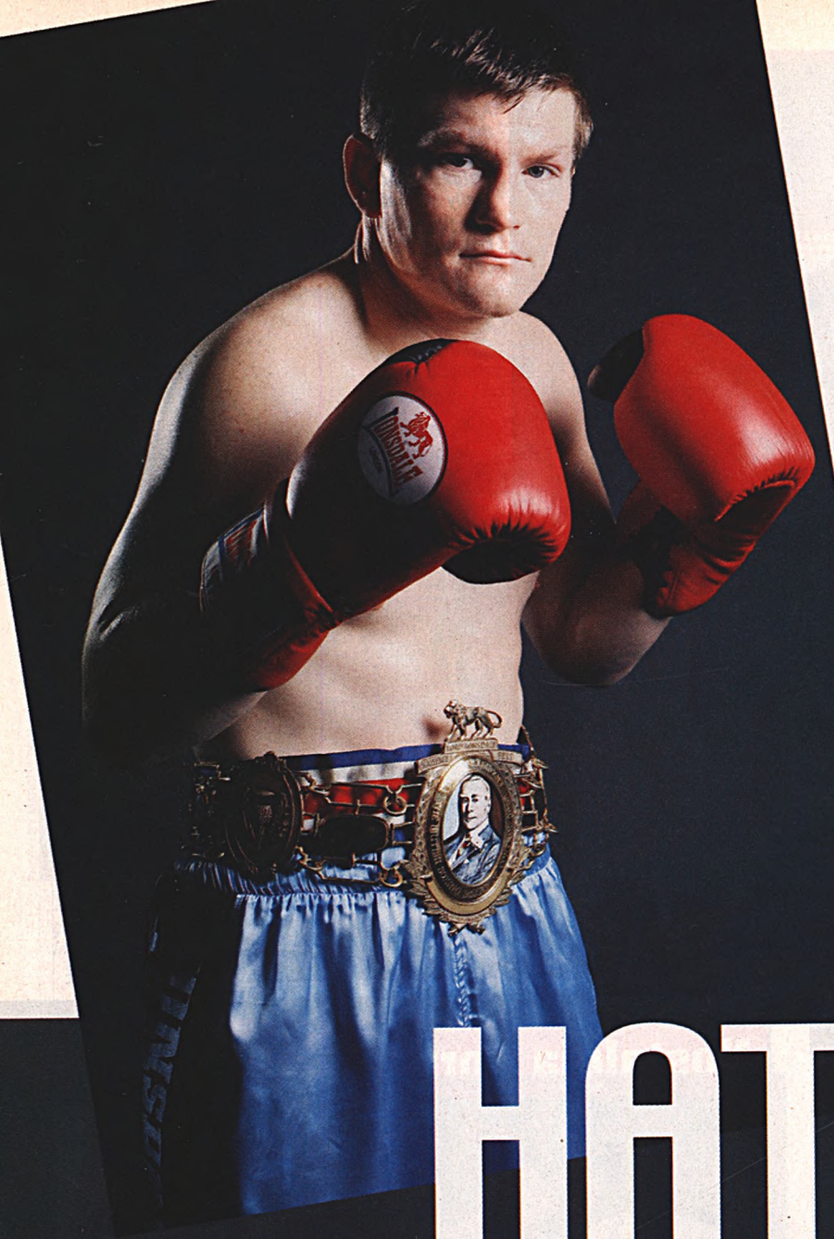


PHOTO BY MARK ROBINS/PUNCH PROMOTIONS

HATTON WANTS PRETTY BOY!

"He's The Best Out There, And I Want To Fight The Best"

By Don Stradley

The fight had ended and Zab Judah was hearing the boos from his fellow New Yorkers. He'd just added another chapter to his uneven career, but this time it was worse because his fans had been hopeful. There was talk that 2006 would be the year he'd meet Floyd Mayweather in what would have been an intriguing fight. All Judah had to do was get past Carlos Baldomir. All he did, however, was choke.

Granted, what we know about Judah would make him a long shot against "Pretty Boy Floyd," but since Mayweather has been fattening his bankbook on old shipwrecks like Arturo Gatti and Sharmba Mitchell, we'd hoped Judah could give Mayweather something like a competitive fight. Considering the last big boxing event concerned a 40-year-old crank and a 27-year-old greenhorn, we really wanted to see two fighters in their prime.

True, Bob Arum and Don King are making a misguided attempt to go ahead with Mayweather-Judah anyway, but so much of the luster vanished when Baldomir upset Judah, it's nowhere near the attraction it would have been.

But rather than yearn for what might have been or questions King and Arum's sanity, let's look at what else is out there for the pound-for-pound leader.

The best fight available, and one that was in the air before Mayweather started dreaming of welterweight laurels, was a junior welterweight shootout between Mayweather and England's Ricky Hatton. There were some issues regarding the location of the bout, and there are always money matters when Mayweather is concerned, so the bout seemed a difficult one to produce. But after Judah's big stumble

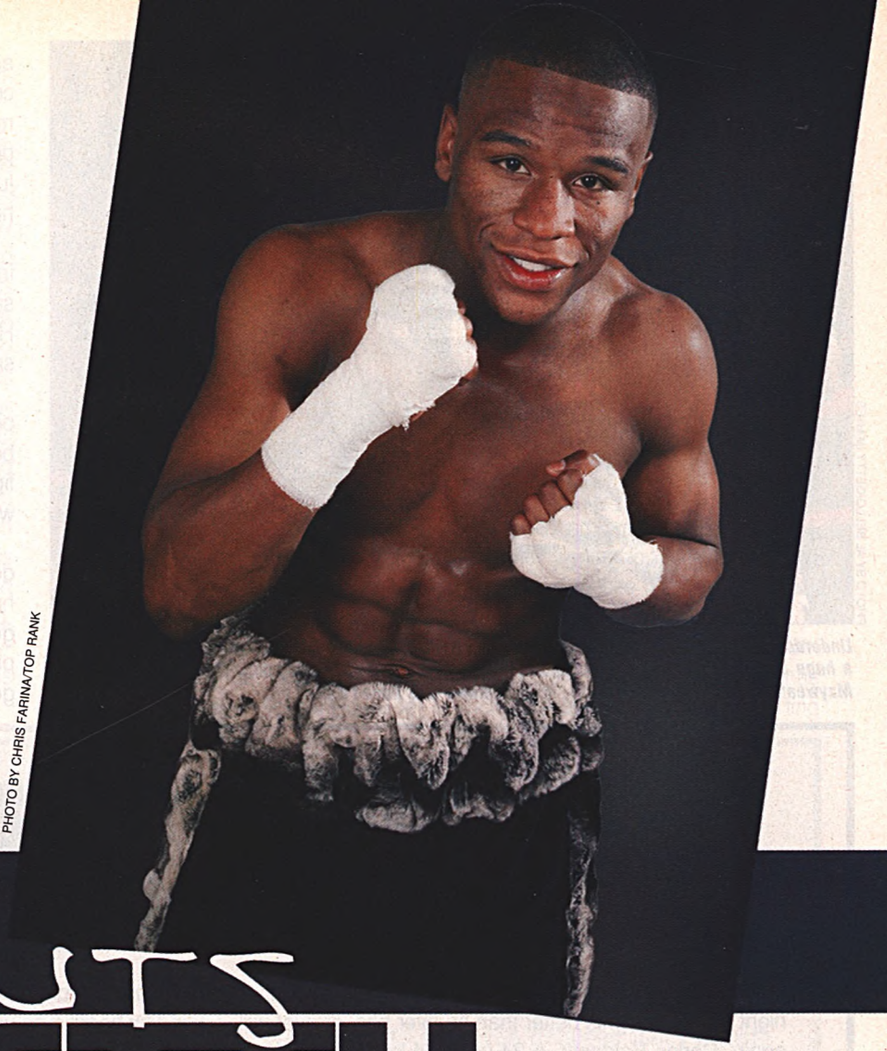


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Underdog Carlos Baldomir attacks Zab Judah en route to winning the welterweight championship in a huge upset that ruined a potential showdown between Judah and pound-for-pound king Floyd Mayweather. Judah fought so badly, his hometown fans booed him.

against Baldomir, Hatton's name has come up again. If you talk to Top Rank matchmaker Bruce Trampler, however, pitting Mayweather against THE RING's junior welterweight champion is not high on their to-do list.

"There are lots of names we're looking at, all up and down the ratings," said Trampler. "Floyd would like to fight Hatton. We're just waiting for Hatton to say yes."

Trampler alluded to Mayweather possibly going after new welterweight boss Baldomir. But would a hard-to-sell fight with the little-known Argentine be worth the bother?

"Why not?" asked Trampler. "Baldomir beat Zab. Look, fighting Judah had nothing to do with Judah being a good fighter. Frankly, we were surprised anyone thought it would be a good fight. We were only interested because Zab had a title. Now Baldomir has the title."

Top Rank's attitude is disappointing. Hatton and Mayweather will never be better than they are right now. Hatton's brick-and-mortar style will probably shorten his career, and Floyd's speed will eventually dessert him. But there is no tastier fight to be made in 2006. The fight would also re-ignite the 140-pound division. One year ago the class was bursting with talent. Kostya Tszyu was on top, with Mayweather, Hatton, Gatti, Miguel Cotto, and Vivian Harris circling around him like sharks. Since then, Tszyu, Gatti, and Harris have been kayoed. Cotto is still unbeaten, but his stock has dropped slightly. Hatton and Mayweather are the last men standing. As for the obstacles preventing a Mayweather-Hatton fight, Trampler was vague. "You'd have to ask Hatton."

* * *

Ricky Hatton's schedule is flush. His days are spent at the gym. He is also working with a ghostwriter to complete an autobiography. Most of his evenings are spent at charity events or business meetings. Every day his popularity swells. Few fighters in America have anything resembling Hatton's fan base. Even Australia has taken an interest in him.

"When I beat Kostya Tszyu, I started getting calls from people inviting me to fight there," he said. "Of course, it might be a trick, they might be trying to lure me into something since I beat their national hero."

His joke is revealing: Popular as he is, there is always something to be suspicious about. His father, Ray, concurs. "As wonderful as last year was, it was quite unpleasant outside the ring," he said, referring to the legal squabbles between Hatton and British promoter Frank Warren.

By the time THE RING spoke with the Hattons for this article, they'd been up all night discussing offers from various American promoters, including Golden Boy Promotions, Banner Promotions, and Main Events, with Banner seemingly having the inside track. The problem, according to Ray, who has acted as his son's advisor for the past three years, is that American promoters are looking for a long-term commitment; Ray wants a single-fight deal. "We'll probably lose out financially by not signing long-term," he said, "but I'd like to see if everything is as rosy as it seems."

Not since P.T. Barnum brought Jumbo the Elephant to America has such care been taken in transporting

BALDOMIR'S BIG NIGHT

James J. Corbett once said that every fighter has a night where he fights better than he ever has, or ever will again. Carlos Baldomir, a 34-year-old journeyman from Santa Fe, Argentina, had one of those nights on January 7, when he won the welterweight championship of the world by beating an unprepared Zab Judah.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Baldomir distorts Judah's face with a left hand

The fight took place in The Theater at Madison Square Garden, Judah's home turf, but just as Judah was when he dominated Cory Spinks in front of Spinks' St. Louis crowd last year, Baldomir was all business. Rumors circulated that Judah had partied the night before the fight, and he still seemed in a party mood when he arrived at the arena with his entourage. During the referee's instructions, Judah hit Baldomir on the hip. It looked like a brazen cheap shot, but it was really the reflex of a fighter whose mind wasn't focused. He'd seemed more concerned about getting his ring entrance together than on defending his title.

Claiming he had the power of God in his right fist, Baldomir chugged forward like a slow, unstoppable train. Judah's headbutting caused Baldomir to leak red from both eyebrows and the bridge of his nose, but the blood-soaked Cinderella Man kept coming, tapping his own granite chin as his confidence grew. He wasn't brilliant, but Baldomir's plodding, big-hearted style was effective. He wobbled Judah during the rollicking seventh, and again in the 12th.

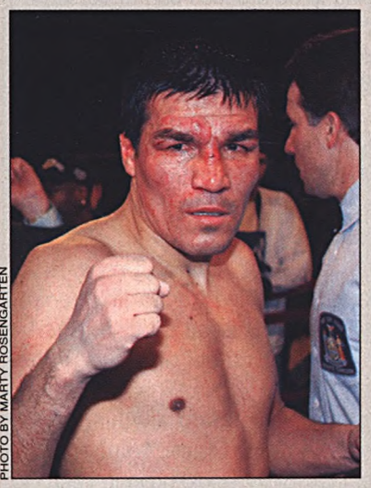


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Baldomir dedicated his fight to the memory of Carlos Monzon

Judges Guido Cavalleri, Julie Lederman, and Melvina Lathan scored the fight for Baldomir by scores of 115-113, 114-113, and 115-112, respectively. THE RING scored the fight for Baldomir, 115-113. All three judges scored the seventh 10-8 for Baldomir despite the fact that there was no knockdown, partly because Judah did so much running and holding.

"In the seventh, I was able to connect a right-hander to the chin that put him in trouble," said Baldomir, now recognized by THE RING and the WBC as the 147-pound champion. "I had been practicing that punch for five months, and I had even dreamed that I would knock him out with it. I was real close."

Baldomir, 42-9-6 (12), made his professional debut in 1993. Prizefighting wasn't enough to support his wife, Graciella, and their four children, so he sold cleaning items door-to-door.

"This is something big for Argentine boxing," said Baldomir, who dedicated his win to the memory of Carlos Monzon. "I wish I can do at least part of what he did."

As for Judah, 34-3 (25), he blamed his loss on having to make too many personal appearances to promote the fight. His father, Yoel, began ranting about Don King, referred to Baldomir as "Balthazar," and accused King of maneuvering to get the title away from Judah. It made no sense, but watching Yoel seethe was an eyeful. Was Zab Judah merely imitating his boorish father when he used to throw tantrums? When Judah was later seen watching his dad venting on a Showtime TV monitor, he had a resigned smile on his face. We thought he was happy at having outgrown his father's crude antics.

—DS

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Mayweather sends Sharmba Mitchell reeling with a right hand during their November 2005 bout that marked "Pretty Boy's" debut as a welterweight. Mayweather kayoed Mitchell in the sixth round to run his record to a glossy 35-0 (24).

an act across the Atlantic. The elder Hatton, a former Manchester footballer who has become a shrewd boxing man, wants Ricky to become used to fighting and training in a different time zone, and to learn more about the American media. Switching from Showtime to HBO is also in the works. Contrary to popular belief, Hatton was never a Showtime fighter; it was Warren who had a contract with the network. "Now we're free agents," said Ray Hatton. He confesses that for all of the headaches involved, it's a nice position to be in. Still, he wants his son to be comfortable in America and to be free of distractions.

"I could tell Ricky he's fighting Mayweather next month, and he'd say okay," Dad said. "But I think it's important to give America a taste first."

Renowned trainer and HBO analyst Emanuel Steward thinks the Hattons are being smart. "They're doing the right thing: coming over here, getting acclimated mentally, spiritually, and emotionally, and getting used to being away from that psychological security blanket that surrounds him back home. Lennox Lewis made the adjustment. So did the Klitschkos. Even Naseem did it. European fighters have been doing pretty good as far as making the transition.

"Hatton has one thing going for him, and that's the serious competitive spirit that he has. That alone is a big asset. Roberto Duran and all of the great fighters had it. He can be a big force over here."

Venue size is also a topic. The Hattons have received offers from many casinos, but Ray Hatton estimates they aren't big enough to hold the 8,000 or 10,000 Brits who might fly over for Hatton's American experience. "It's not just for Ricky. It's also for his fans," he said, "When Ricky takes the microphone and speaks to them after a fight, he's doing it from the heart. They've followed him for years, and they'll follow him to America. They've dreamed of seeing him fight in New York or Las Vegas. They'll turn it into a three-day holiday."

The plan seems to be this: If Mayweather won't come to England, the Hattons will bring England to the States. Still, Mayweather's camp isn't worried.

"I'm confident Floyd will beat anyone in the world," said Roger Mayweather, Floyd's uncle and trainer. "Hatton's going to be a punch bag because he's got no defense. He's a tough guy and takes risks. But against Floyd, those risks are going to cost him."

"The odds would have to favor Mayweather slightly," said Steward. "I'm a big Ricky Hatton fan, but it's hard to make a prediction based on his last two fights. Carlos Maussa makes anyone look bad. Against Tszyu, Ricky started punching from a little too far away, with his head up high. Against Tszyu he could get away with it because Tszyu likes to fight at a normal tempo and can't do anything if you make him fight fast. Against Mayweather, Ricky would have to keep the pressure on him but tighten up his defense. I'd give him a good chance, but he's got to make some changes."

Hatton's wildness varies from fight to fight. Ironically, it was Steward who suggested Hatton fight wilder against Tszyu. "I told him, stay on him, don't be too intelligent," Steward said. "Just be an animal, and he'll fall apart. Hatton's style could also work against Floyd, but he

has to be more compact and precise."

Fighting Ricky Hatton is like being trapped in the middle of a rugby scrum. He's unafraid to take punches, and Steward estimates Hatton doesn't take as many punches as we think. "He's deceptive and he rolls with punches pretty good," Steward said. And since he took Tszyu's best punches, we're sure that Hatton is as durable as they come.

Mayweather has never experienced anything like Hatton. He had a dose of it during his first fight with Jose Luis Castillo, a fight that many thought Mayweather was lucky to win on points. Castillo is not quite the pressure cooker that Hatton is. Castillo needs at least a little room to unwind his left hook; Hatton practically climbs into your mouth. Hatton's smothering style might be just the thing to dampen Mayweather's speed. It won't be pretty—Mayweather has already commented that Hatton is more of a wrestler than a boxer—but it might work. Granted, Hatton will miss a lot of punches, but he'll be landing plenty too.

Then again, Mayweather has otherworldly reflexes and a diabolical mind. If it turns out to be Muhammad Ali vs. Henry Cooper all over again, with the game Brit losing on cuts, then so be it. Or maybe it's Hagler-Minter redux, with Mayweather winning easily, and then hustling back to his dressing room under a storm of debris. Or maybe Mayweather's hands, which in the past have been as brittle as a pair of Chinese wind instruments, will break down on him, allowing Hatton a chance to bang his way to a decision win. Any number of things could happen. That's why the fight's so intriguing.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

After stopping Carlos Maussa in his first defense of the junior welterweight championship (pictured), the undefeated Hatton says he's ready to fight Mayweather immediately. But his father wants Hatton to take another fight in the U.S. first.

"As far I'm concerned, it's a done deal," said Hatton. "Floyd's the one I want. Every spare minute I have I think about him. For two or three years, I thought only of Kostya Tszyu. Even when I was preparing to fight other opponents, I was thinking of Tszyu. Now it's Mayweather in the back of my mind. When I'm alone for 10 minutes, which is rare, I think about what I'd do to him.

"I can't say anything bad about Floyd. He's the best out there, and I want to fight the best. I don't care if he goes up to welterweight. I've seen him in person, and I don't think he's as big as I am. My trainer, Billy Graham, and I have already started our plans.

"All I need is one fight before that so American fans can see me in the flesh. I think American fans will get behind me. I fought there very early in my career in New York, New Jersey, and Detroit. American fans are the same as anywhere. They want their money's worth. I've always said, I'd rather be in an exciting fight and lose than be in a dull fight and win. Well, there's nothing dull about me, that's for sure."

There's nothing dull about Mayweather either. But his chief weapon is not his speed or his airtight defense. It's his ability to break an opponent's heart. As opponents realize they can't get to his chin or avoid his laser beam punches, their fighting spirit leaves them, making them easy to beat. But Hatton, who is only 27, has spirit to burn. If he arrives on U.S. shores with 10,000 Brits in tow, he'll be a hard man to break.

And when it's over, win or lose, we doubt anyone will be booing him. ■

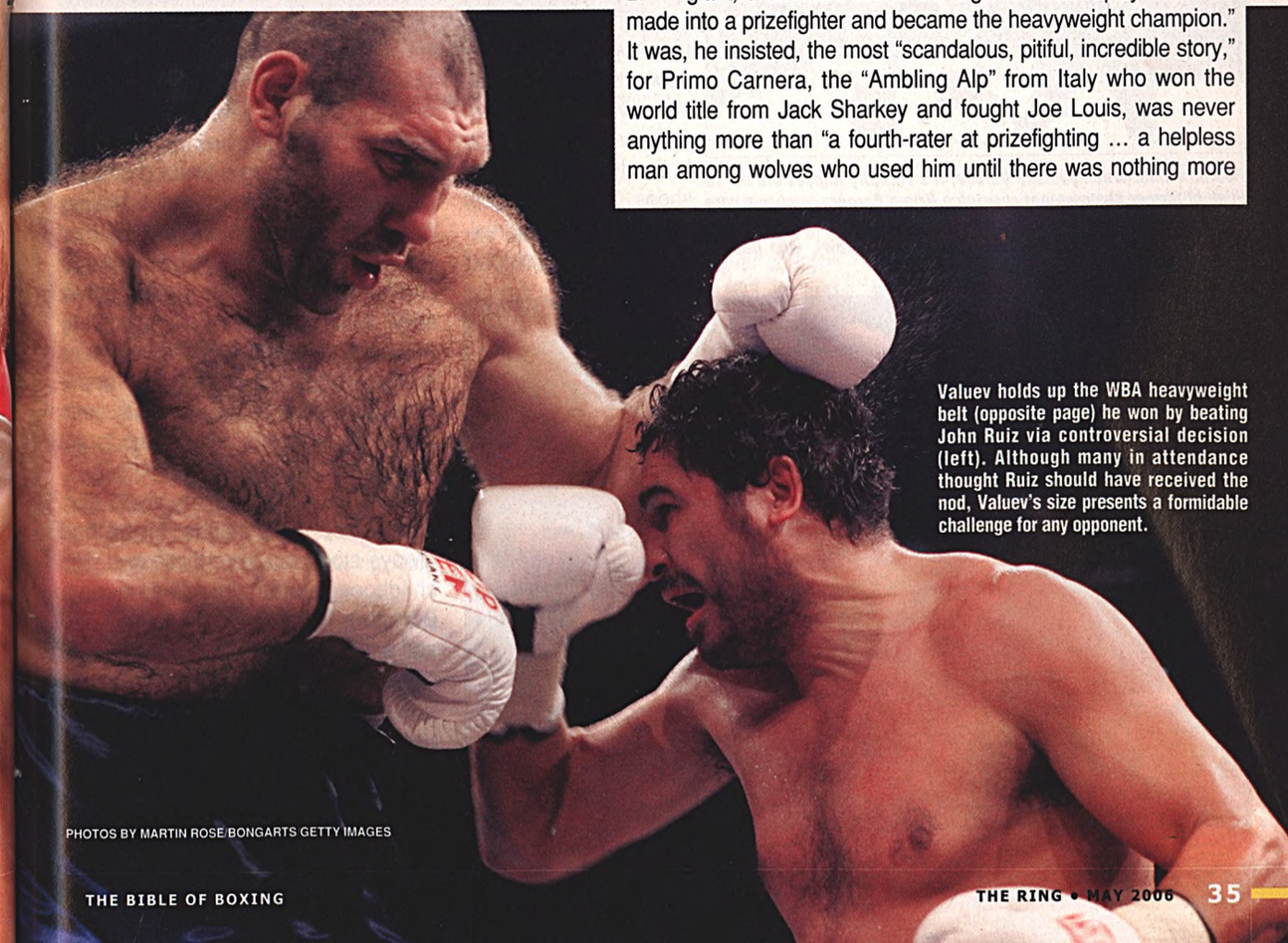
Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to this magazine.

KING'S NEW KONG NIKOLAY VALUEV

"If People Take Me Seriously Or Not, That Is Up To Them"

By Brian Doogan

Paul Gallico, the American novelist and New York *Daily News* columnist, once wrote about "the tale of the living giant, a creature out of the legends of antiquity who was made into a prizefighter and became the heavyweight champion." It was, he insisted, the most "scandalous, pitiful, incredible story," for Primo Carnera, the "Ambling Alp" from Italy who won the world title from Jack Sharkey and fought Joe Louis, was never anything more than "a fourth-rater at prizefighting ... a helpless man among wolves who used him until there was nothing more

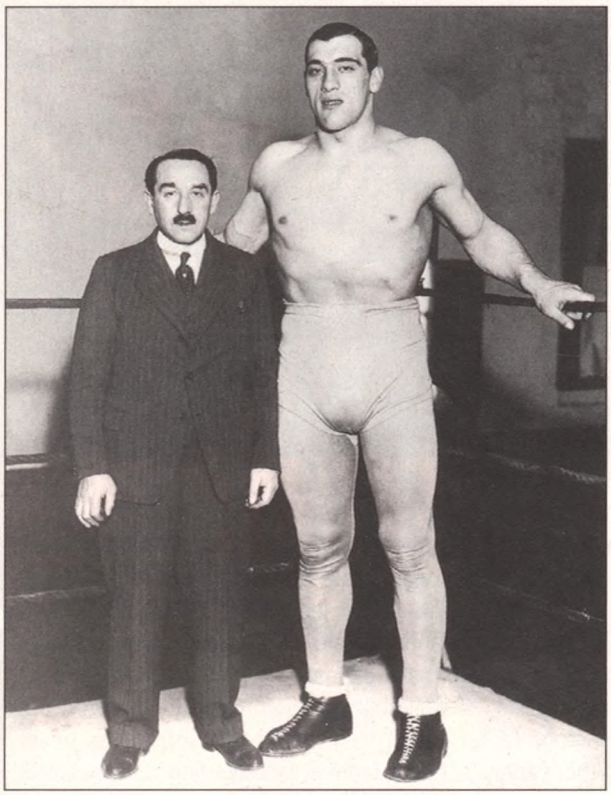


Valuev holds up the WBA heavyweight belt (opposite page) he won by beating John Ruiz via controversial decision (left). Although many in attendance thought Ruiz should have received the nod, Valuev's size presents a formidable challenge for any opponent.

PHOTOS BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS GETTY IMAGES

left to use, until the last possible penny had been squeezed from his big carcass." When he returned home to the village of Sequals, where he died alone, Gallico noted how "none of the carrion birds who had picked him clean ever came back to see him or to help him."

Nikolay Valuev brought to mind the sad story of Carnera when he won the WBA heavyweight title from John Ruiz on December 17 in Berlin's Max Schmeling Halle. At 7' and 323 pounds, bearing an unnerving resemblance to Neanderthal Man, the 32-year-old Russian is Carnera's natural successor, the tallest and heaviest titlist ever, a freak show for people to gawk at and guffaw. "Come one, come all. Watch Shrek box," was how *The Boston Globe*, Ruiz' hometown newspaper, characterized the fight, a spectacle on a par with the bearded lady at a three-ring circus. "The Beast From The East," of course, had heard it all before.



Two of a kind: When you see Valuev, it's virtually impossible not to think of former heavyweight champion Primo Carnera, pictured with his manager, Leon See, in 1930 (above). Valuev poses with his alphabet belt and new co-promoter, Don King (below), who has 50 percent of the big guy's next four fights.

"I'm really not a beast," he said with a self-conscious smile back in his hometown of St. Petersburg, where the snow fell gently outside. It was Christmas, and his six-year-old son, Grisha, moved excitedly around their small one-room flat, playing with his new toy, a battery-powered robot, while Valuev's petite wife, Galya, stepped out lightly on her way to the shops. "I'm a very calm person. I never get really angry. As a child, I loved to go fishing with my father. I read Tolstoy and Agatha Christie novels. I even wrote poetry. I know what people say about me because of my size and because of how I look, but that's not the way I am. The people who know me know I am a gentle person. I just happen also to like boxing."

Beating Ruiz by a majority points decision made him the first Russian to lay claim to the splintered remnants of the richest prize in sport. "He's the eighth wonder of the world," cackled Don King, the promoter who now owns 50 percent of Valuev, along with his German promoter, Wilfried Sauerland, who first began working with Valuev in the summer of 2003, rescuing him from the obscurity of backwater town freak shows.

"As soon as I saw him I told him, 'I think you can become a top contender, even a world champion.' I had no doubt in my mind about this," Sauerland reflected happily in the aftermath of Valuev's victory, which was tarnished by its controversial scoring, the vast majority of ringside observers siding with Ruiz. "Because of his size, he had been promoted as a sideshow act. He went through many promoters and many managers. But I saw in him something different. I really believed that with effort and better training he had a serious chance of becoming a world champion. So we invested in him, paid good money for top sparring partners and the best training, and his potential began to reach fruition. There was great improvement in his boxing almost immediately and people no longer looked on him as a joke. I began to have to pay opponents three times what I would pay them to fight other boxers in the camp to get them to box Niko."

For Valuev, the opportunity to gain acceptance felt precious, for he had always stood out from the crowd. His childhood, nonetheless, was happy. Born to a father who stands only 5'5" and a mother who is 5'4", life in the former Soviet Union was not easy. Sergei Nikolaevich had a factory job, making radios, while his wife, Nadezhda Mixailovna, worked too, to make ends meet. It soon became apparent that together they had created a monster, a

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Man versus mountain: Ruiz found it far more difficult than he originally thought connecting cleanly on his huge opponent. The Russian giant also took Ruiz' blows well and was never in any danger of going down or getting stopped.

gentle giant who shared the same genetic defect that cursed Carnera, a pituitary gland problem that saw him grow to 6'7"—the same size as the enormous Wladimir Klitschko is today—by the age of 16.

"I have always been big, even when I was an infant," Valuev explained. "I knew I was going to be very large when I became a man. The question was how large."

Another question was how his size might best be utilized.

"I had a passion for sport, and it was suggested that I should try boxing, but I never dreamt of becoming champion or being rich and famous and having the chance to travel all over the world," revealed Valuev, who had been a competent discus thrower and basketball player, having been sent to a sports boarding school. "I really did not think this could happen to me through boxing. The sport was popular in Russia and I began boxing in 1992. I was 20 and I wanted to do something active. I had about 13, 14 amateur fights, not many, but because of my size and strength I was able to become the Russian national championship silver medalist in 1993. At first, boxing was a hobby, but I decided to become a professional fighter quickly."

A Goliath in gloves, Valuev was packaged as cruelly as Carnera once was. Most of his opponents were cannon fodder. One, American Gerald Nobles, was so unnerved when he came face-to-navel with Valuev at the weigh-in that he deliberately aimed blows to his behemoth opponent's knees to get himself disqualified and out of there as quickly as possible. Others, such as Alexei Osokin, Evgueni Odolski, and George Linberger, were so intimidated that their escapes proved even less convincing. With a pawing jab and a telegraphed right hand, Valuev began to build a reputation. In little arenas in Sydney, Seoul, London, and Minsk, using his massive body to bully his fear-ridden foes, he was able to make a living by trading on the freak factor.

Then, with Sauerland's guidance, he was maneuvered toward title contention, earning his big chance with a controversial majority decision against Larry Donald. The American made him look like the ungainly colossus he is when an opponent is able to move too quickly and too often, but, in the eyes of the judges, Donald did not do enough. "He was able to make it look, just by his sheer size, that he was hitting me when he wasn't," said Donald. "I never faced a man like him, ever. I've never seen a man like him either."

When Ruiz got his first glimpse, he was pleasantly surprised.

"He's not as big as I had imagined," the 6'2", 240-pounder said before the fight. "But he'll be a big enough target. The hardest part of the night for me will

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Despite his ponderous style and telegraphed punches, Valuev managed to rock Ruiz with a right hand in the final round. Even so, most of the crowd of approximately 10,000 on hand in Berlin booed the decision.

be helping to get him up. He has a head the size of a Volkswagen. I won't be able to miss."

But Ruiz missed plenty, discovering in the ring that effective work was not so easily demonstrated against such a massive man and that Valuev's sheer size created, at least in the eyes of the judges, an illusion of dominance. The Russian's jab was not as ponderous as scouting reports had suggested it might be and his right hand, though it was a crude and always predictable weapon, had just enough dexterity to land and score from time to time. Valuev never punched his weight, which, at 323 pounds, was just as well for Ruiz.

The first Latino heavyweight titleholder needed to make the most of his better all-round athleticism and his sharper skills, but his movement for most of the fight was ineptly negligible. Valuev's blue trunks had enough material in them to make a decent set of curtains, and at times it looked as if Ruiz was caught up in curtains that he simply could not part. Just by standing still, Valuev surrounded him. "A tugboat and a super tanker, that's how it looks to me," remarked a wag at ringside.

Valuev showed the athletic grace of a herd of buffalo on the stampede, but Ruiz found him harder to hit than he expected. The giant proved game, standing up to the hooks that Ruiz smashed against his chin and into his massive midriff. This King Kong took all of his assailant's shots and still roared hard, scoring with his long left and landing a thudding right behind it on the occasions when Ruiz was too slow in his thinking to spin out to more advantageous range. Inside, he was able to do damage, but Valuev proved highly adept at tying him up and using his imposing frame to lean hard on Ruiz in the clinches, a tactic that proved successful in wearing him down.

After eight rounds—Valuev had hurt Ruiz with a solid left hook in the eighth—all three judges had the Russian ahead by the same score, 77-75, an interpretation that seemed to be based on what appeared to be happening rather than what was actually taking place, for Ruiz was always putting in the more worthwhile work. One of the judges gave Ruiz the next three rounds. They were both tired as the fight moved into it its climactic stages. Ruiz landed a good left, and Valuev clinched. Belatedly, South African referee Stanley Christodoulou warned him for holding. A sharp one-two by Valuev then wobbled Ruiz, but neither camp could have been confident when the bell rang and the decision lapsed into the judges' hands.

Derek Milham of Australia and Mexico's Hector Hernandez scored the bout for Valuev, 116-114 and 116-113, respectively. Francisco Martinez of New Zealand had it 114-114 apiece. THE RING's card showed Ruiz to be the winner by 115-113, and the boos that cascaded down from the majority of people in a 10,000-strong crowd demonstrated the verdict of the populace. Norman Stone, Ruiz' manager, stealthily removed the belt from the new titleholder's shoulder and was roundly cheered.

"I'm used to crowds that mostly support my opponents, because I'm always boxing against people smaller than me," said Valuev. "It's natural that the crowds support my opponent. But right after it was over, I felt like I was the clear winner. I waited 12 years for this moment and it's fantastic."

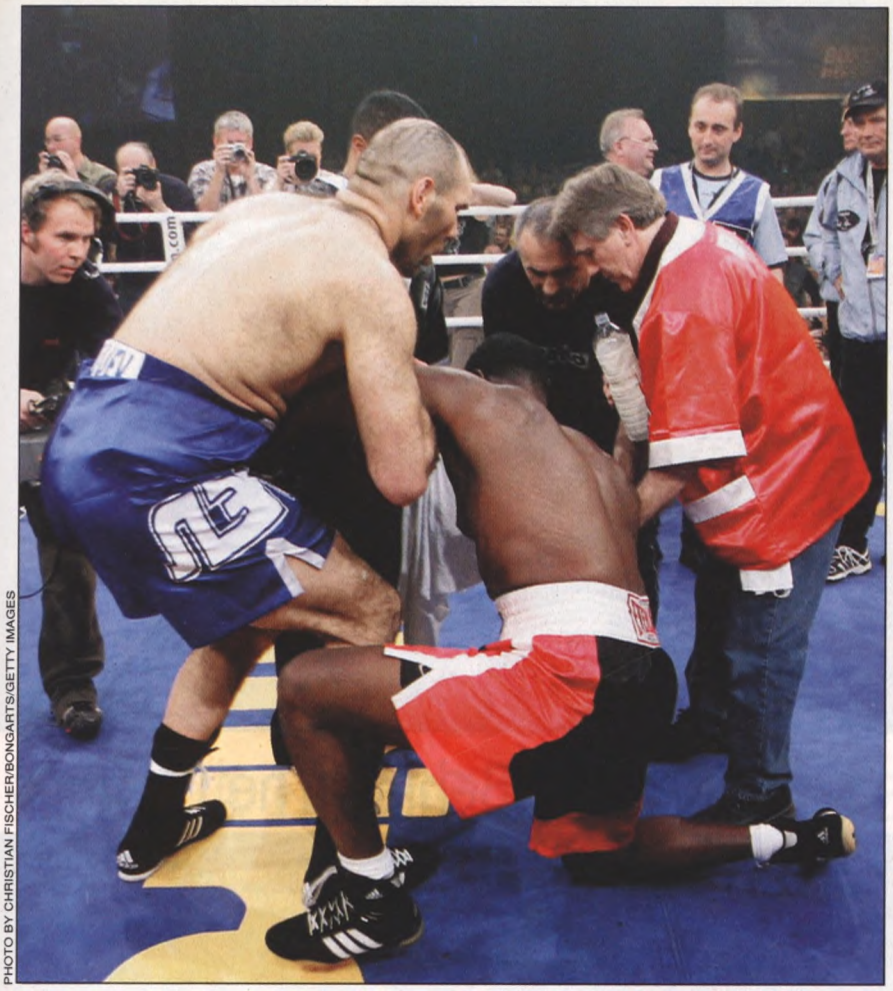


PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN FISCHER/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Valuev helps victim Cliff Etienne to his feet after stopping "The Black Rhino" in the third round in May 2005. "The Beast From The East" says he is a "gentle person" outside of the boxing ring.

Back in St. Petersburg, he revealed that the belt had been too small to clip around his waist. He was ready to go to America, he said, to prove his worth in another place. Meanwhile, his German promoter revealed that his next bout will be on April 1 in Germany, with the younger Klitschko brother ready to provide a challenge that they would eventually like to embrace. But initially, Valuev's handlers are likely to keep it safe.

"There is no one in the division who can beat Niko if he continues to improve," said Sauerland. "When the time is right, we would love to make a match with Wladimir Klitschko. That would be a huge fight in Germany."

Despite the years of derision, Valuev never gave up on his dream, and Ruiz' failure to box more assertively created the necessary circumstances for his vindication as a fighter.

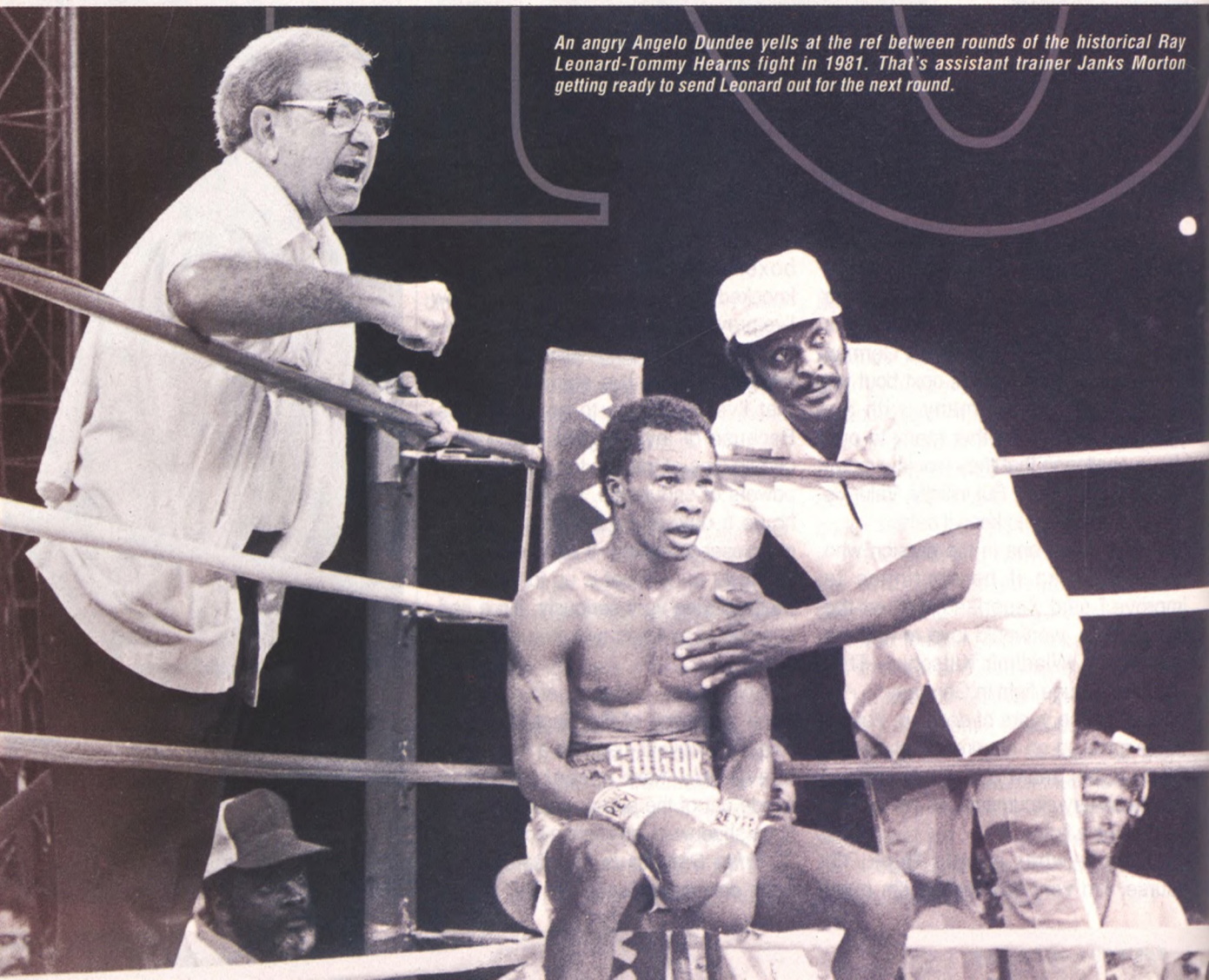
"I know what people think. Of course, I'm very strong and I'm huge and not what people usually see in a boxer. But I have heart. I've been knocked down and I've got up and now I've proved I'm a champion too," Valuev declared. "My boxing skills are improving all the time. I've surprised people that I've been able to go 12 rounds. Because of my different size, I do a certain type of training to strengthen my powers of endurance. I train about five hours a day, and more than that as I get closer to a fight. If people take me seriously or not, that is up to them. But I take boxing very seriously. It's a serious business when two men climb into the ring."

Still, people will snigger when they catch a glimpse of the giant. "Big guy," said a cynical old man with a cigar and a heavy New York accent as Valuev strode out of the arena under Carnera's huge shadow. "Can't fight a lick." ■

Brian Doogan is The Ring's European correspondent.

10

The Men Behind The Champs



An angry Angelo Dundee yells at the ref between rounds of the historical Ray Leonard-Tommy Hearns fight in 1981. That's assistant trainer Janks Morton getting ready to send Leonard out for the next round.

THE TOP 10 TRAINERS IN THE WORLD TODAY

By William Dettloff

One of the fight game's eternal questions asks if the trainer makes the fighter or does the fighter make the trainer? No less a giant in his field than Ray Arcel told writer Ronald Fried, "You're only as good as the fighter you work with. I don't care how much you know, if your fighter can't fight, you're another bum in the park."

Angelo Dundee frequently has credited his great success to "being in the right place at the right time." If Arcel and Dundee are entirely right, then the fighter makes the trainer and that presents the unsettling possibility that the best trainer today is right now in the corner of some hole-in-the-wall gym lacing up a kid's glove, and you don't know his name and probably won't ever. He hasn't been in the right place at the right time and won't ever be because the odds against it are too great. It means too that maybe the greatest trainer who's ever rubbed a fighter's neck died quietly and anonymously a hundred years ago.

There is reason to suspect that to some degree humility compels the great trainers to answer as Arcel and Dundee did. Logic dictates that in a vocation, any vocation, some practitioners are better at their trade than are others (and

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

Dan Birmingham gives Lacy some last-minute advice before "Left Hook" pounded Robin Reid into submission. Lacy recently went back with Birmingham after working with other trainers, and the results have been impressive. Birmingham also trains Winky Wright.

maybe a large part of that is the ability to judge talent). That being the case, there must be some that are vastly better than the rest at what they do, and on the following pages we've chosen the 10 best in the world today and, not ranked them, but presented them in alphabetical order.

It's important first to define the word "trained" in this context. When we use that word, we don't generally mean guys who have taken fighters from their first sparring session to world titles, though there are a couple of them included. Most trainers, even the best ones, are transient in the sense that they're hired guns to a great degree. They work with this guy one night, maybe his opponent the next. Maybe a fighter keeps him around so long as he's winning, but dumps him as soon as he loses. Maybe later he calls him back. It's romantic but rare that a fighter and trainer are together for the fighter's entire career. That's just the way it works. Here are the guys who make it work best.

NACHO BERISTAIN

Forget the stereotype you have of Mexican fighters. Forget the face-first defense, the bleeding, the partying, the temper, the one big left hook and nothing else. Forget the notion that Mexican fighters are brawlers, because they don't have to be by any stretch, and if you don't believe us, look at the work Beristain has done.

Daniel Zaragoza was no one's idea of a big puncher or a great natural talent, and Beristain took him to the Hall of Fame. Ricardo Lopez, who retired undefeated, was one of the most skilled and ring-smart champions of his era, and he too is a lock for the Hall. Juan Manuel Marquez is one of the slickest technicians in the business, maybe too slick for his own good, and baby brother Rafael is starting to look like Marco Antonio Barrera in there. It's not luck when about every fighter a guy trains shows off world-class skills, impeccable conditioning, and a champion's heart. Beristain leaves his mark.

DAN BIRMINGHAM

Almost no one takes a kid from the moment he walks into the gym and grooms him all the way to the top of the sport. It doesn't work that way. A kid who cracks the top 10 might go through three or four or five trainers by the time he gets a title shot, taking from each trainer a little of this, a little of that. Outside the old Kronk, it just doesn't happen much.

What does it say, then, that Birmingham has been in Winky Wright's corner since the day Wright walked into the gym? And that's not all. Out of that same gym in St. Petersburg, Florida, came Jeff Lacy, whom Birmingham taught to jab, taught how to hit the speedbag, how to hook. They separated for 10 years, and then reunited in 2004. Everyone's seen how much Lacy has improved since then. It's no coincidence. Also, if you're a fan of fast-rising super middleweight prospect Chad Dawson, take a look in his corner some time. You'll see Birmingham there too.

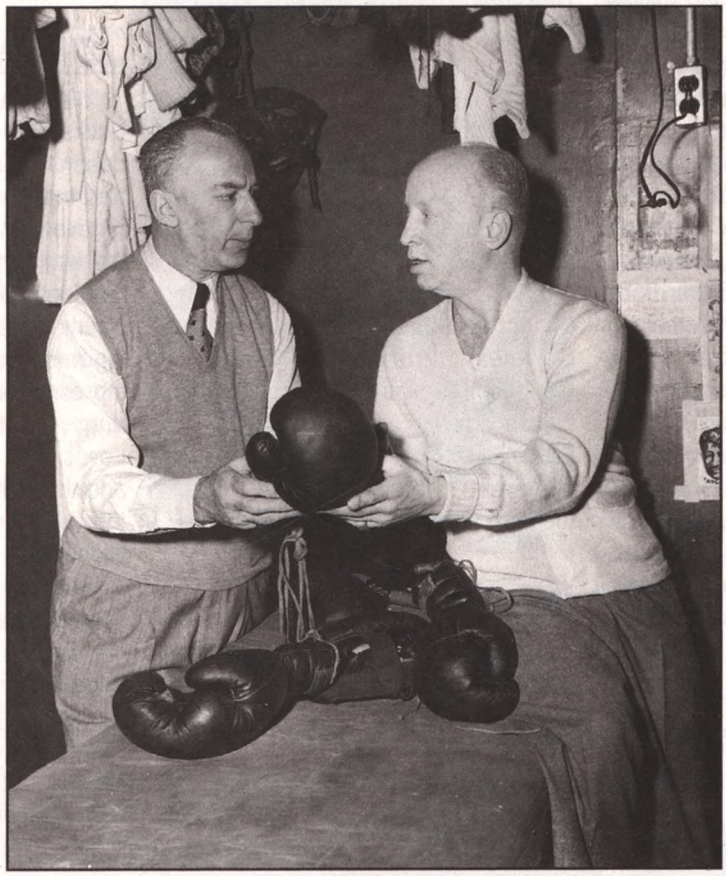
AMILCAR BRUSA

It's true that Carlos Baldomir isn't much to look at the ring, and it probably wouldn't have taken a fighting genius to take the welterweight world title from Zab Judah the way Baldomir did. But a fighting genius is precisely what

THE GREATEST TRAINERS EVER

When it comes down to it, the only way you have to judge the success of a trainer is by looking at the fighters he's been associated with over his career. Going largely by that criterion, here's our list, in alphabetical order, of the greatest trainers ever.

There's not another trainer in history whose resume matches that of **Ray Arcel**, whose career spanned some 60 years. Arcel trained Frankie Genaro, Benny Leonard (during Leonard's comeback), Barney Ross, Ezzard Charles, Freddie Steele, Jimmy Braddock, Ceferino Garcia, Billy Soose, Tony Zale, and countless others during boxing's heyday. In the last stage of his career, he co-trained Roberto Duran. He is arguably among the top two or three greatest trainers in the history of the sport.



Two all-time greats: Arcel and Bimstein

You couldn't ask for more success than **George Benton** had when he took four members of the Olympic class of '84—Pernell Whitaker, Evander Holyfield, Meldrick Taylor, Mark Breland—to major titles. Throw Mike McCallum in there too.

Whitey Bimstein was partners with Arcel from 1925 to '34. Together they trained Jackie "Kid" Berg, Lou Brillouard, and Sixto Escobar. After they split, Bimstein did quite well on his own, working with Harry Greb, Gene Tunney, Rocky Graziano, Ingemar Johannson, Billy Graham, and about every other top fighter from the era.

Maybe he performed his best miracles as Rocky Maricano's cutman, but **Freddie Brown** was far more than that. He co-trained Roberto Duran, and worked with Dick Tiger, Tony Janiro, Joey Archer, Vito Antuofermo, Gaspar Ortega, and did a long spell with Larry Holmes.

You probably know **Angelo Dundee** for his work with a couple of guys named Muhammad Ali and Sugar Ray Leonard. But before Ali and Leonard there was Willie Pastrano, Luis Rodriguez, Carmen Basilio (whom Dundee co-trained with Al Silvani), Jimmy Ellis, Sugar Ramos, and Ralph Dupas.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO

Futch (with Riddick Bowe) personified "dignity"

Don't give **Eddie Futch** credit for making Joe Frazier; he didn't come into the picture until Yank Durham died. But Futch is among the two or three most accomplished trainers of the latter half of the 20th century, having guided Frazier and Ken Norton to victories over Ali, and also handling Bob Foster, Alexis Arguello, Marlon Starling, Michael Spinks, Larry Holmes, Virgil Hill, Wayne McCullough, and Riddick Bowe.

It took a special trainer to turn the crude, unskilled lump that was the young Rocky Marciano into an undefeated heavyweight champion. **Charlie Goldman** was that trainer. He also worked with Johnny Risko, Lou Ambers, Marty Servo, Joey Archibald, Oscar Bonavena, and others.

He doesn't have a very long list of world champions and he was a manger as much as a trainer, but **Cus D'Amato** brought us two current Hall of Famers in Floyd Patterson and Jose Torres, and a future one in Mike Tyson. That doesn't happen by accident.

Before he turned to being an advisor on movie sets, **Al Silvani** worked with Rocky Graziano, Tami Mauriello, Jake LaMotta, Nino Benvenuti, and Alexis Arguello, along with many others.

—WD

Baldomir has in the corner in Brusa, who is recognized as the Godfather of Argentine prizefighting.

Brusa turned Carlos Monzon into one of the great middleweights and maybe the most dominant fighter of his era. That would be enough to get him on most lists of great trainers, and Monzon was his greatest work of art. But he didn't stop there. Brusa has trained Miguel Angel Cuello, Antonio Esparragoza, Rafael Pineda, Jorge Barrios, Carlos Hernandez, Francisco Tejedor, Tomas Molinares, Sugar Baby Rojas, Miguel Lora, and many others. If a good fighter comes out of Argentina, you know Brusa has worked with him. Now based in Los Angeles and 83 years old, he's still active, working with fighters under the Sycuan Ringside Promotions and Golden Boy Promotions banners. Next time you see him in a corner, remember what Baldomir did to Judah. Brusa's guy will always have a chance.

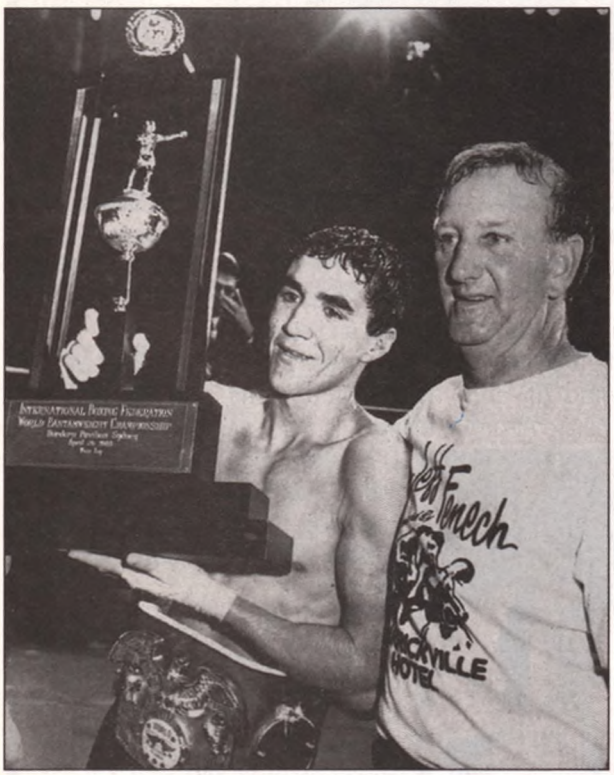
JOE GOOSSEN

Maybe you don't like the pompadour haircut or the paisley shirts or the way Goossen looks, even after all these years, out of place in a prizefighter's corner. It doesn't matter. The man can teach. In another era, he and his brother Dan took a pair of scrawny Mexican brothers named Rafael and Gabriel Ruelas and made them titleholders, not to mention Michael Nunn.

Ask Joel Casamayor what Goossen is worth. He beat Diego Corrales with him, and then decided to go elsewhere. Corrales hired Goossen for the rematch and walked away with the decision win. And who can forget Goossen's matter-of-fact counseling to Corrales in Corrales' stirring win over Joe Luis Castillo? The guy is a pro. His Ten Goose Boxing Gym in Van Nuys, California, is stocked with some of the best fighters in the world, and they aren't there to check out the paisley shirts.

BRENDAN INGLE

It would be a shame if years from now all American fight fans remembered Ingle for his grooming of Naseem Hamed, whom Ingle first spotted as a seven-year-old kid and took from the streets to the featherweight title. While it's true that Hamed was a remarkable specimen and for a time was one the game's more exciting performers, Ingle has done much more.



Australia's Johnny Lewis poses with young Jeff Fenech moments after Fenech stopped Satoshi Shingaki for the IBF bantamweight title in 1985. Lewis also trained junior welterweight champion Kostya Tszyu and WBC light heavyweight titleholder Jeff Harding.

Ingle has been training prizefighters out of St. Thomas' Gym in Sheffield, England, for 50 years. In addition to Hamed, he gave us Herol "The Bomber" Graham and Johnny Nelson, and works now with Junior Witter, a top-10 junior welterweight. Critics can and do argue that all of Ingle's fighters bear a certain awkwardness and under-reliance on conventional defensive techniques and always will be by undone top-level fighters. But there's a reason Ingle is a legend in England and one of the two or three most respected trainers in all of Europe: He turns fighters into champions.

JOHNNY LEWIS

With Kostya Tszyu's future uncertain, Lewis is in limbo right now, but that doesn't mean he's not still one of the best in the world. Lewis was with Tszyu for every professional fight, took him all the way to the top, and stayed there a good long time. His unconventional but clearly beneficial training and conditioning methods guaranteed Tszyu was in top condition whenever he entered the ring. And don't forget, before Tszyu, Lewis took Jeff Fenech to three titles and the Hall of Fame, and even turned the fairly ordinary Jeff Harding into a titleholder.

It's been a long time since Lewis has had a big stable of fighters, and about the only guy he works with currently is Paul Briggs, who you'll remember was in a terrific war with Tomasz Adamek last May. Briggs is no Tszyu, Fenech, or even Harding, but with Lewis in his corner, he'll be the best fighter he could hope to be.

BUDDY McGIRT

You could argue McGirt gets too much credit for turning around Arturo Gatti's career. After all, Gatti could box long before he ran into McGirt. He just never wanted to. You could argue too that Antonio Tarver would have beaten Roy Jones no matter who was in his corner, that he always just had Jones' number. Here's the thing: Don't tell that to either Gatti or Tarver. They're not dumb; they know they can fight. But they also swear by McGirt.

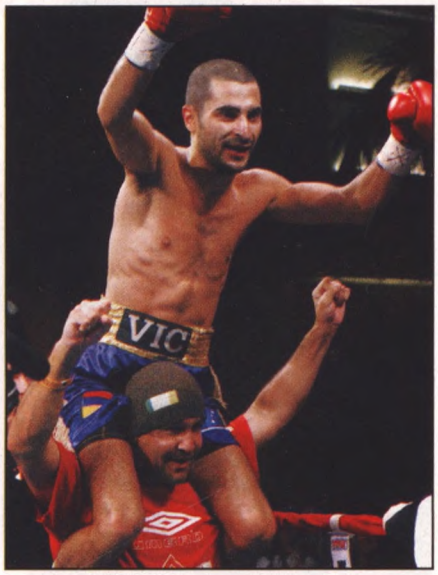
They're not the only ones. McGirt is at this writing the hottest trainer in the business, recently picking up Lamon Brewster and Michael Grant. His gym, McGirt's Elite Boxing Gym in Vero Beach, Florida, is the hottest gym in the southern half of the United States and has been home to, among others, Nate Campbell, Joel Casamayor, Mike Anchondo, Jameel McCline, Timo Hoffman, and Sharmba Mitchell. McGirt was a damned good fighter, but was

SIX GUYS TO WATCH FOR

It's too early yet to tell if these six up-and-comers will make their mark as exceptional cornermen, but we think they're worth keeping an eye on.

Even with the two alphabet titles he won, **Mark Breland** never did fulfill the great promise he showed as one of the most dominant American amateurs ever. And he couldn't do a thing with Marlon Starling. But he's starting to make noise as a trainer and at this writing is working with former welterweight champion Vernon Forrest, among others.

He's got a long way to go with Shane Mosley, but we like what **John David Jackson** is doing so far. And it wasn't his fault Nate Campbell fooled around and got knocked out by Robbie Peden.



Fenech lifts IBF flyweight titleholder Vic Darchinyan

Jeff Fenech's stable includes Vic Darchinyan, Hussein Hussein, Nedal Hussein, and Lovemore Ndou. Fenech's assistant, **Billy Hussein** (brother of Nedal and Hussein), is making a name for himself as well.

Wonder why Demetrius Hopkins has made considerable improvement over the last year? Look no farther than **Derek "Bozy" Ennis**. He's the best young trainer in Philadelphia and has developed Hopkins, whom Ennis has worked with since he turned pro, into a harder puncher. Ennis has also helped in the recent re-emergence of slick junior middleweight Anthony Thompson.

Right now, the only guy two-time former heavyweight beltholder **Michael Moorer** is training is prospect J.D. Chapman, who's greener than the inside of Don King's wallet. We get the sense, though, that the thoughtful, cerebral Moorer will make a very effective corner guy.

—WD

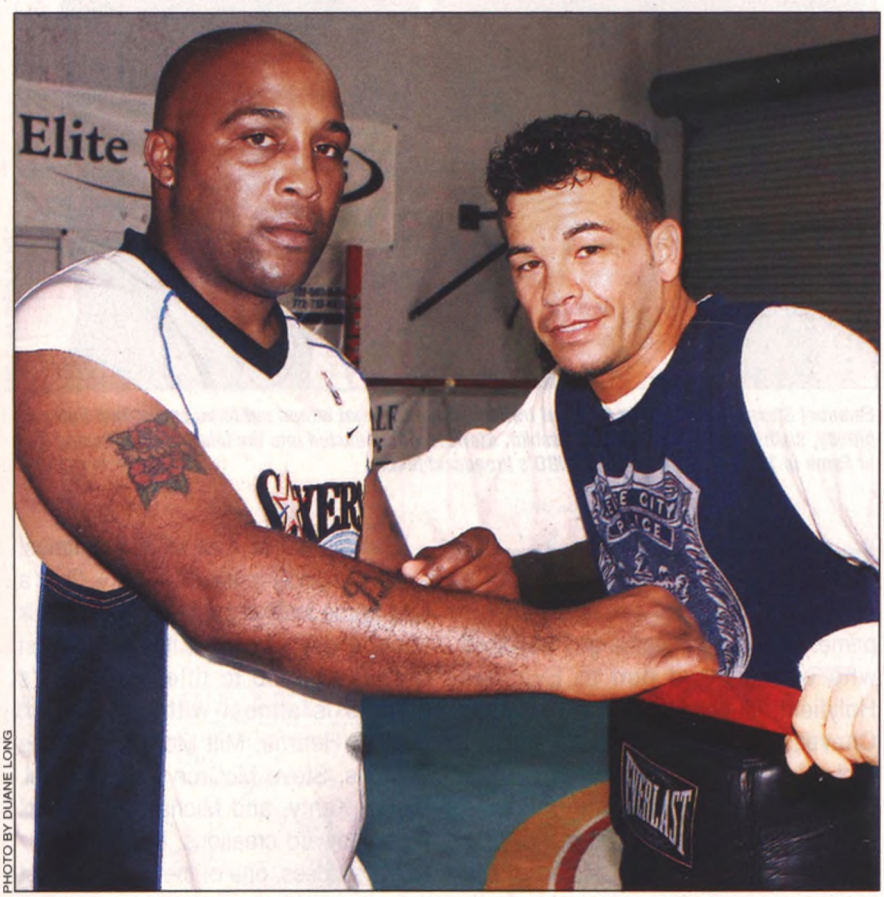


PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

Buddy McGirt with Arturo Gatti at McGirt's gym in Vero Beach, Florida. A two-division former titleholder, McGirt is proving to be an even better trainer than he was a boxer.

never great. He may turn out to be a great trainer.

FREDDIE ROACH

It's not Roach's fault that Manny Pacquiao still doesn't keep his hands up or stay on balance. It's not Roach's fault James Toney can't push himself away from the dinner table, or that Juan Lazcano couldn't handle Jose Luis Castillo, or that Brian Viloria is a junior flyweight. All fighters are flawed and all have bad nights. When it comes to giving a fighter all he needs to win, there may be no one in the business better than Roach.

If you wonder how Virgil Hill is still competitive at 40 years old, Roach is a good portion of the answer. He's made his Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles one of the most popular in the United States, and has worked with too many top fighters to list. Extra kudos to Roach for going to the mat for Pacquiao when he was at odds with former promoter Murad Muhammad. One more thing we love about Roach: You'll never hear him scream at his guy in the corner. It's not his style.

FRITZ SDUNEK

To put it plainly, Sdunek is the Emanuel Steward of German prize-fighting. Pick a top German fighter or one from a country nearby, and chances are good that Sdunek trains him right now or trained him somewhere along the way. Oktay Urkal, Mohammed Abdullaev, Istvan Kovacs, Alexander Dimitrenko, Zsolt Erdei, and Juan Carlos Gomez have at one time or another been under Sdunek's tutelage at the Universum Gym in Hamburg.

Sdunek helped make Dariusz Michalczewski no worse than the second-best light heavyweight of his era, and, of course, took Vitali Klitschko—not the most gifted fighter ever, you'll agree—to the world heavyweight title. Critics will argue that Sdunek's connection to Universum Box Promotions means he's handed the best German fighters on a silver platter. They already good when he gets them. We're doubtful. The guy's got a proven track record with some of the best fighters in the world. At that level, you can't fake it.

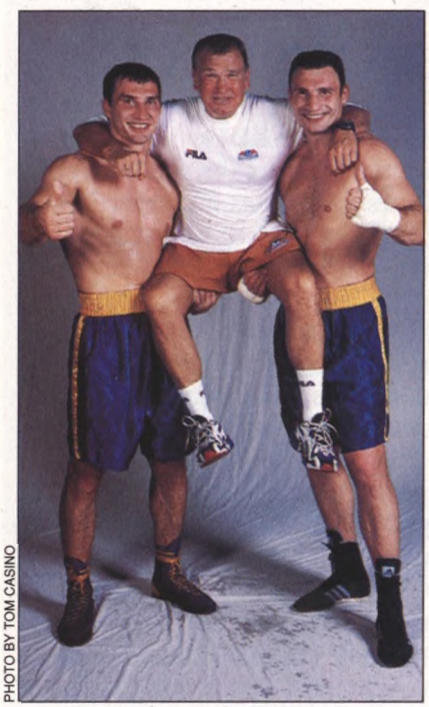


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Fritz Sdunek gets a lift from pupils Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko following a training session in Atlantic City. Sdunek has trained many outstanding European fighters besides the Klitschkos, including current light heavyweight contender Zsolt Erdie.

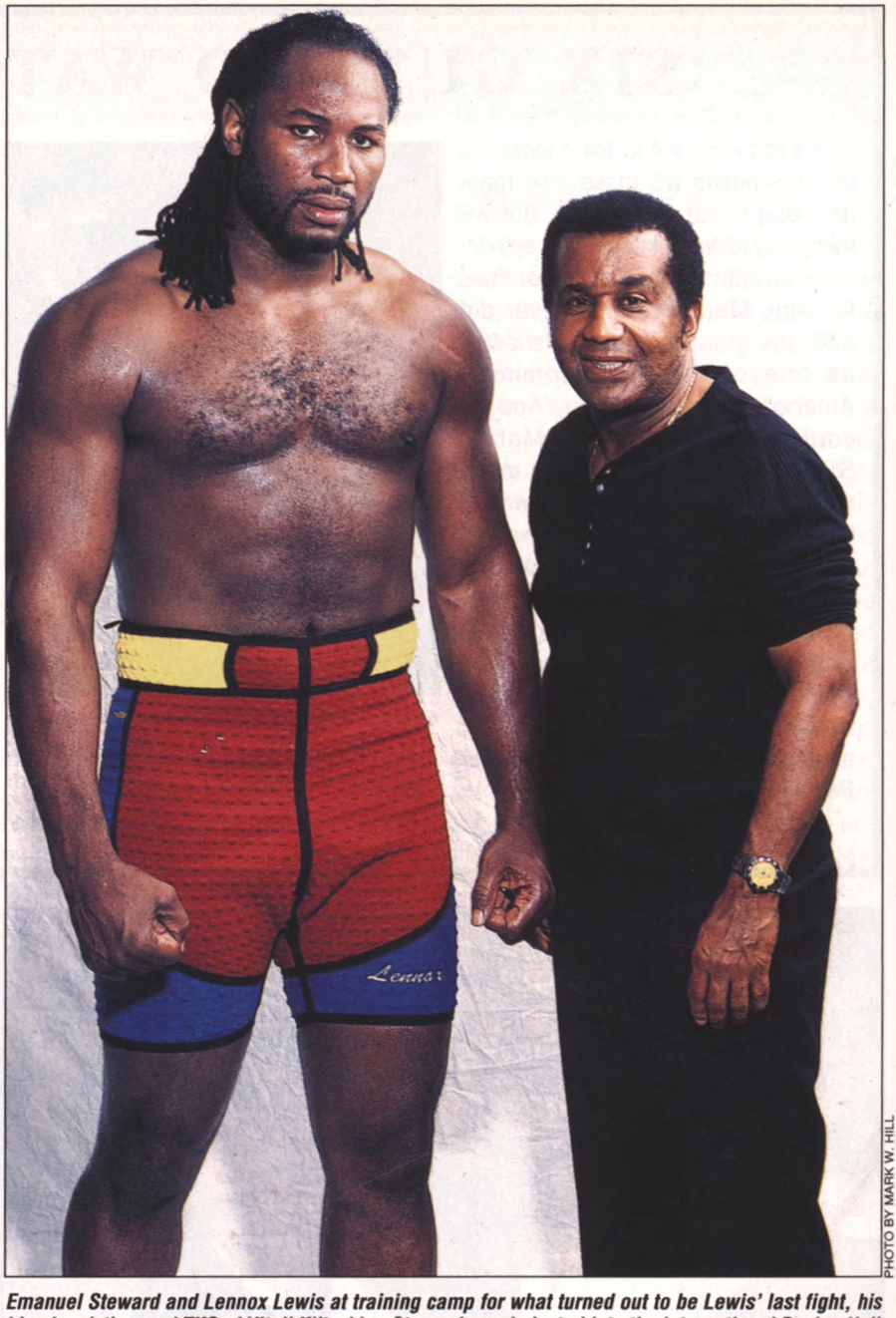


PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Emanuel Steward and Lennox Lewis at training camp for what turned out to be Lewis' last fight, his bloody, sixth-round TKO of Vitali Klitschko. Steward was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1996. He is also part of HBO's broadcast team.

EMANUEL STEWARD

Steward is almost certainly past his prime. He's not the same guy anymore who was a hired gun to Evander Holyfield, Oliver McCall, Julio Cesar Chavez, or Oscar De La Hoya. He's probably not even as good as he was when he helped turn Lennox Lewis from a clumsy right-hand puncher to a versatile boxer/puncher. He's not the best anymore, but what the hell, nobody stays at the top forever.

Steward's run was long. He almost single-handedly made The Kronk Gym a fight game institution. If you want to talk about a guy who took fighters almost from the womb to titles, Steward's resume is almost without parallel: Tommy Hearns, Milt McCrory, Duane Thomas, Steve McCrory, Jimmy Paul, Hilmer Kenty, and Michael Moorer all were Steward creations. He's still, after all his success, one of the best guys out there, and Wladimir Klitschko is damn lucky to have him. ■

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★ Kid Gavilan
★ Ken Buchanan
★ Azumah Nelson
★ Buddy McGirt
★ Michael Carbajal
★ Barry McGuigan
★ "Irish" Micky Ward
★ Carlos Palomino
★ Sir Henry Cooper
★ Dwight Qawi
★ Tommy Morrison
★ Angelo Dundee
★ Angel Manfredy
★ Terry Norris
★ Livingstone Bramble
★ Ricardo "Finito" Lopez
★ James "Buster" Douglas
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★ Johnny Tapia
★ Arturo "Thunder" Gatti
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RAY "BOOM BOOM" MANCINI

By Robert Cassidy

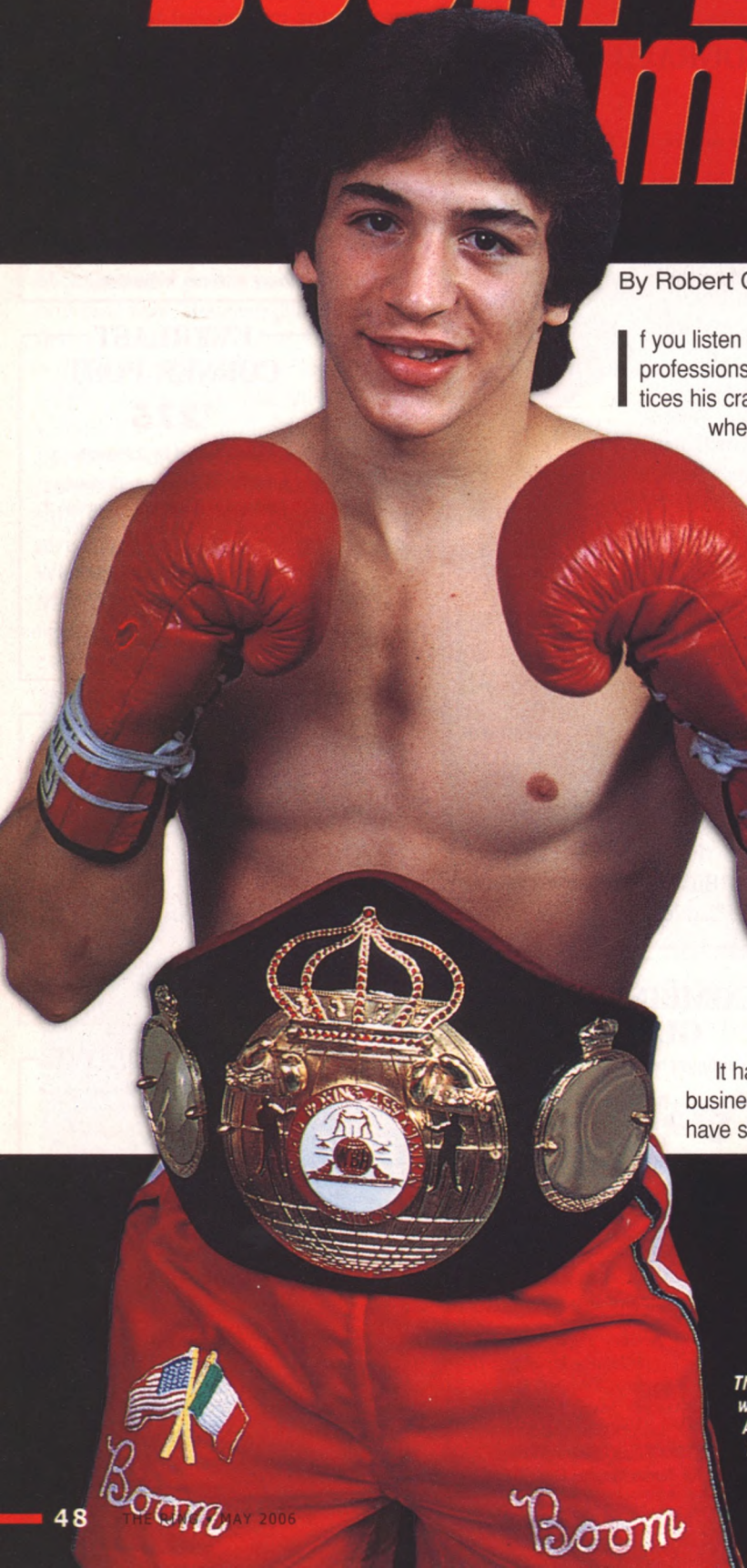
If you listen to Ray Mancini, it is almost as if he's never changed professions. He still considers himself a performer, still practices his craft with the same degree of intensity, and still knows when to counter and when to lead.

The biggest difference? When he sheds blood, it's not real.

Mancini left the ring for the stage and has approached his acting career with a workmanlike attitude similar to the way he once broke down his opponents. It was his gutsy, blue-collar ethic that made him one of the most popular fighters of the 1980s.

"The same things that it takes to be a good fighter you need to have success in acting—discipline and focus," said Mancini. "Doing a scene is a lot like the ebb and flow of a fight. You are sparring with the person who is in the scene with you. You have to feel each other out, and you have to counter each other. And I came into this as someone who was used to being in front of the camera."

It has been 13 years since Mancini last fought, but show business has allowed him to stay in the public eye. You may have seen him on television in *Who's the Boss?*, on the big



Then and now: Mancini as he appeared in 1982, shortly after winning the WBA lightweight belt with a first-round kayo of Art Frias (left), and as he looked in December 2005 at the Ring 8's banquet in New York City (opposite page).

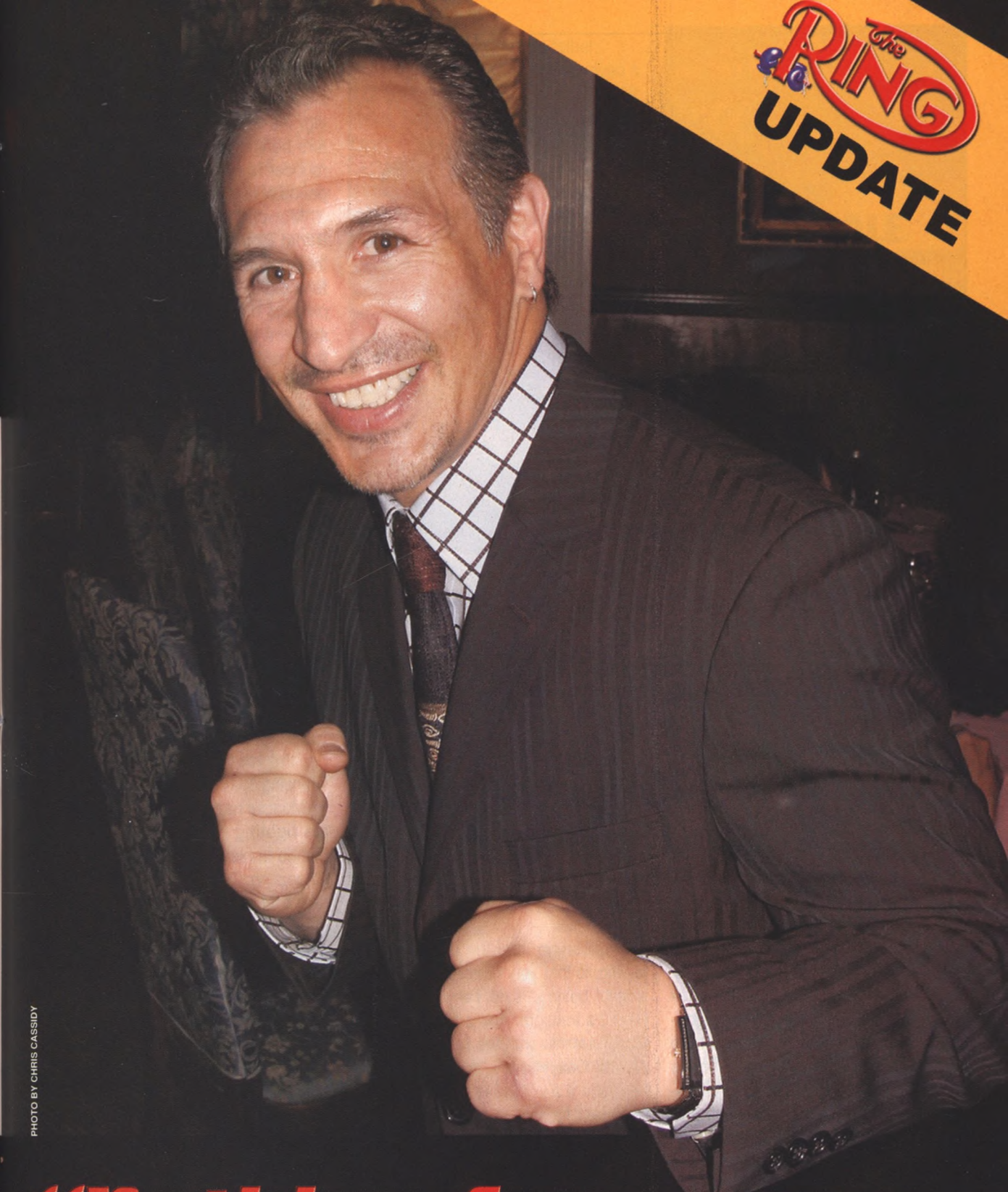


PHOTO BY CHRIS CASSIDY

"Nothing Compares To Winning The Title"

Mancini and fellow athlete-turned-actor John Matusak in a scene from the ABC-TV movie* Dirty Dozen IV. *Mancini now has his own production company that specializes in infomercials, but new backing from Wall Street investors will allow more ambitious projects in the near future.

screen in *The Mouse*, or on Showtime in the remake of *Body And Soul*.

But regardless of the success (or lack thereof) of Mancini's films, his popularity has not waned. In December, he was honored by Ring 8, New York's Chapter of the Veteran Boxers Association for his work with the group in providing a new headstone for Kid Gavilan. At Ring 8's annual banquet, the line of fans seeking his autograph or to shake his hand never seemed to end. He posed for pictures and chatted amicably with anyone who approached. Clearly, Mancini was the main attraction at an event that included the likes of Ken Norton, Chuck Wepner, Emile Griffith, Vito Antuofermo, and Juan LaPorte.

"My feeling, and the organization's feeling, is that Ray represents the good side of boxing," said Tony Mazzarella, Ring 8's treasurer and a former Deputy Commissioner with the New York State Athletic Commission. "With Kid Gavilan, he made it a priority to be there; it was important for him to show his respect. We didn't have to go out of our way for him; he didn't ask for anything. The only thing he wanted to know was where and what time. He did appearances and he went on the radio. He did anything he could do to help."

Mancini, who turns 45 in March and still looks in fighting shape, is the first to admit his theatrical career has yet to reach the heights of his boxing career. That might change soon.

"After the last film, I came to understand that the only way to make an impact is to have secure financial backing," he said. "Now that we have investors behind us, I'm going from a four-rounder to main event status in a short period of time."

Mancini's production company, Boom Boom Entertainment, now has the support of a Wall Street-based venture capitalist group, enabling him to produce major motion pictures. Mancini secures properties (scripts or books) that can be developed into films. He said the financial support would allow him to pursue films with a budget of $20- to $50-million. His group would come up with half the money and split the worldwide rights with the studio.

Another exciting aspect of Mancini's company—and perhaps what ultimately sold the investors—is the production of infomercials. And while it's not glamorous, it pays the bills.

"In health care and particularly lower body extremities, business is off the hook," he said. "I know film production is risky, but the infomercial business is a very substantial, lucrative part of our company. It's the division that can supply the movie productions with its financing."

Mancini has been around films since his fighting days. In fact, he had a cameo in his own life story, *Heart Of A Champion: The Ray Mancini Story*. It is rare that an athlete has a movie produced about his life, but Mancini was one of those fighters who transcended his sport. He was tough and aggressive and a network staple, bleeding in people's living rooms on Saturday afternoons.

Such was his popularity that in 1985 it led to the made-for-television movie starring Doug McKeon as Mancini and Robert Blake as his father, Lenny.

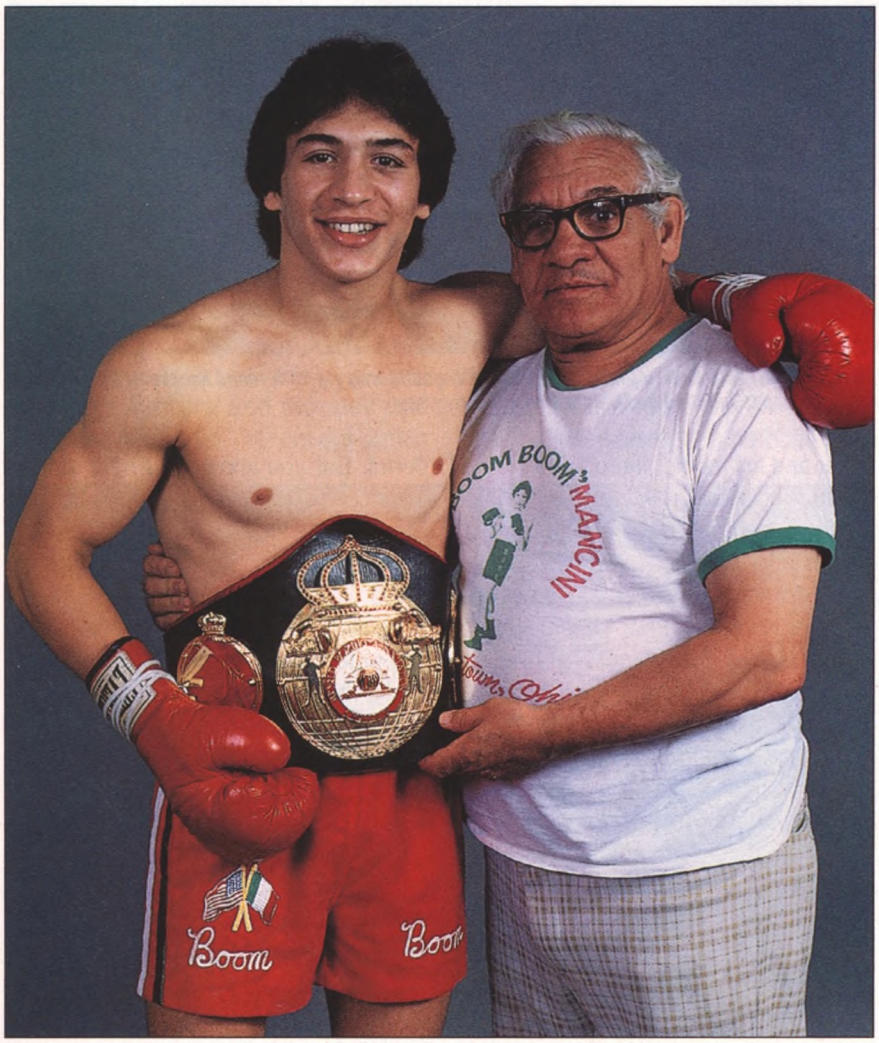
"I was flattered to have a film made of my life," said Mancini. "But I wasn't particularly flattered with how Robert Blake portrayed my father. He played him as a typical broken down ex-pug. The director tried to tell Blake that that's not how Lenny Mancini is. Blake didn't want to meet my father, he was like, 'I saw him on TV, I have an idea on how I want to play him.'"

Lenny Mancini was the motivation behind Ray's ring success. The original "Boom Boom," Lenny boxed from 1939 to 1947. He was a contender in the lightweight division, but was drafted into service during World War II and never received a title shot. Although he resumed boxing after the war, Lenny had been wounded in action and never regained his top form. The son vowed to win the belt that eluded his father and turned pro in 1979 at the age of 18. Ray was managed by former sportswriter Dave Wolf, who brilliantly marketed Mancini's all-America looks and blood-and-guts style.

"He was as game as anyone," said Mazzarella. "He was a throwback fighter, and a lot of the fighters in our organization appreciate the kind of fighter he was. A lot of our fighters also had a great deal of respect for his father."

In October 1981, Mancini received a shot against WBC lightweight titleholder Alexis Arguello. At the time, experts thought that Arguello, a future Hall of Famer, would outclass the young Mancini. Arguello had 77 pro fights behind him, while Mancini was participating in his 21st. Instead, Mancini battled the champion in a grueling fight that Arguello finally won by knockout in the 14th round.

"The emotional pressure I felt going into that, it helped me tremendously for the next title fight," said Mancini. "I had already been there. I had already handled that pressure. I think I came out a winner in the Arguello fight even though I lost. If I would have got blown out in one or two rounds, I knew I wouldn't have belonged in there. But I went 14,



Mancini poses with the original "Boom Boom," his father, Lenny, a former lightweight contender whose career was interrupted by World War II. Ray did not like the way actor Robert Blake portrayed his father in a TV movie about their lives.

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Mancini mixes it up with Alexis Arguello during their October 1981 title bout in Atlantic City, which Arguello won via 14th-round knockout. Mancini says that his strong showing against the legendary Nicaraguan proved to him that he belonged with the very best.

and I was winning after 12. Now, I see the mistakes I made. I was young. Alexis had the saying, 'drag him into deep waters.' That's where experience takes over. But after that fight, I knew I could be champion."

After two tune-up fights, Mancini was matched against WBA titlist Arturo Frias. It was brutally short. Mancini was dazed twice and cut in the first round, but he somehow drew strength from his father at ringside and blitzed Frias with 30 seconds left in the opener. The fight never got past round one. Mancini dropped Frias and then unleashed a barrage of punches that forced a stoppage. It remains the highlight of his career.

"Nothing compares to winning the title," he said. "I look at the tapes and I still get choked up. That was my lifelong dream, winning the title and having my father and my mother there."

Mancini would make four successful title defenses before losing the belt to Livingston Bramble in 1984. The bout that most remember him for, however, was the tragic defense against South Korean Duek Koo Kim. Fighting on national television, Mancini battered Kim and finally stopped him in the 14th round. Kim would die four days later from head injuries sustained in the bout.

Mancini won't talk about the Kim fight anymore. "I hear about it often, but everything that can been said about that has been said. It's been talked about enough."

Mancini did say how tough it was to get back into the ring less than two months later. "Dave Wolf thought that it would be the perfect spot for me to fight in Italy. The people in Italy were wonderful. But you know, you hear stories about the European press, and they brutalize you. They are relentless. I'll never talk bad about the American press. In Europe, if they ask you something and you don't answer, then they just write what they want."

As for the fight, Mancini won a nondescript 10-round decision over George Feeney in St. Vincent d'Aoste.

"I was exhausted emotionally and mentally," said Mancini. "I just wanted to get the fight over with. I wanted to get in and get out."

Mancini would make successful title defenses against Orlando Romero and Bobby Chacon before losing consecutive fights to Bramble. He retired in 1985 but was lured back to the ring four years later to meet Hector Camacho in the first of two comebacks. Mancini

chased Camacho for much of the 12 rounds and lost a split decision.

"The Camacho fight was personal; he made it personal by what he was saying," said Mancini. "I don't regret that. I beat him. He admitted it on Spanish television. He said, 'I lost, but they gave it to me.'"

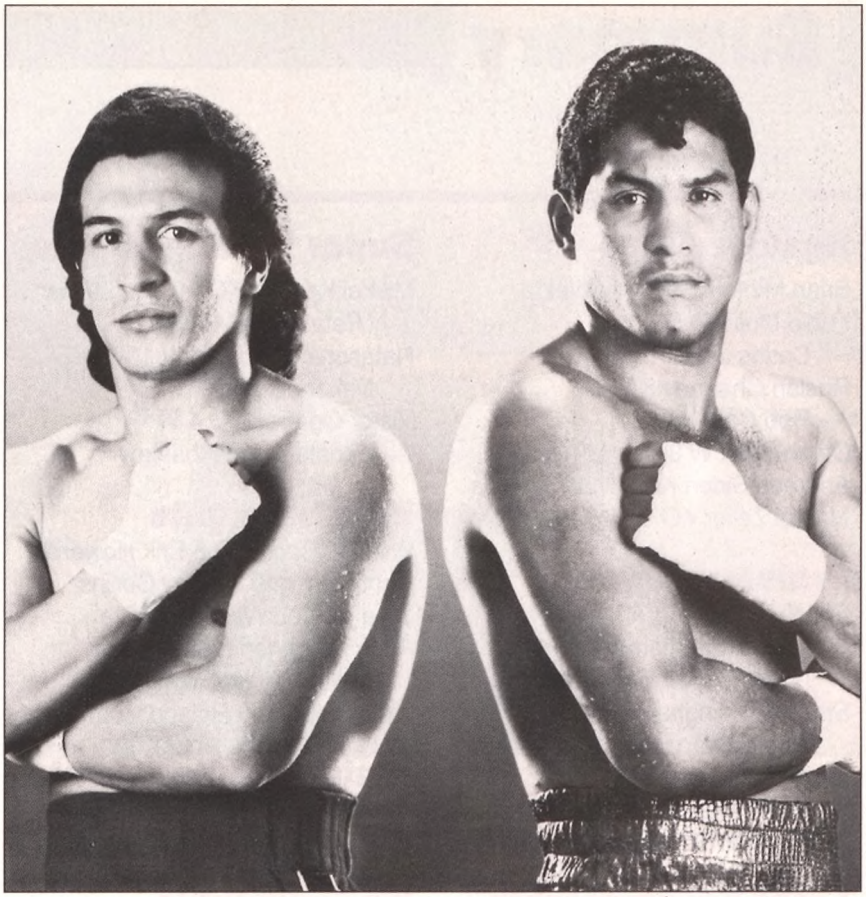
Then, three years later in 1992, Mancini came back one more time. His seventh-round TKO loss to Greg Haugen was one he clearly regrets. He had just finished an off-Broadway play when he was offered the match and he started training camp just when his second son had been born.

"It wasn't that I thought less of Haugen, I thought more of myself," said Mancini. "I didn't want to go through the rest of my life thinking, *What if?*"

But Mancini recalls waking up for training and hearing Eric Clapton's tearful ballad to his lost son, "Tears In Heaven," and knew he was making a mistake. "That song just came out at the time and I'd heard it and I'd say to myself, *What am I doing here?*"

Mancini lives in Los Angeles with Cameron, his wife of 16 years and their children, Nina 15, Leonardo, 14 and Ray Jr., 9. Mancini avidly follows the fight game and, like most observers, is particularly impressed with Floyd Mayweather.

"I love Barrera and Morales and Pacquiao," he said. "I'll always watch them. You have to love them. But I really love Floyd Mayweather. He is special. I haven't seen a fighter since Duran dominate at 130 to 140 the way Mayweather has. He just doesn't win; he dominates. He's the best fighter that I've seen. He has an innate ability to do things that even Sugar Ray Leonard didn't do."



Mancini came out of retirement to fight Hector Camacho in 1989, and although he lost the decision, even Camacho thought the nod should have gone to "Boom Boom." Mancini had one more bout and retired with an overall record of 29-5 (23).

Mancini's primary objective is to become a major player in Hollywood. He has worked alongside some very talented actors, including John and Nicholas Turturro, Steve Buscemi, Samuel L. Jackson, Joe Montegna, Charles Durning, and the legendary Rod Steiger.

"Being around a guy like Rod Steiger was great," said Mancini. "I just watched the way he prepared, the way he went about his work. He was a professional. Just like in the ring, you come in prepared. You have to connect with a role. You have to commit to it, or you can't do it. There is always a part of you that you add to every role. Acting is such a challenge."

If boxing has taught us anything about Mancini, it's that he usually doesn't back away from a challenge until he's conquered it. ■

Robert Cassidy is a former associate editor of this magazine and a

PHOTO BY CHRIS CASSIDY

Mancini and his son Leonardo at the Ring 8 banquet, where Papa Mancini was the main attraction with those in attendance. Mancini was gracious and accessible, signing autographs, shaking hands, and posing for pictures with his many admirers.

[Summary]

Heavyweights

Brian Minto KO 3 Troy Weida
Fabio Moli KO 5
Carlos Javier Roldan
Ruslan Chagaev KO 2
Rob Calloway
Owen Beck W 8 Darnell Wilson
Andreas Sidon KO 4 Ihar Shukala
Marcel Zeller KO 3 Mariescu Doro

Cruiserweights

O'Neil Bell KO 10
Jean-Marc Mormeck
(*Wins World Title*)
Steve Cunningham KO 5
Lloyd Bryan
Gregory Drozd KO 5
Pavel Melkomian
Ali Saidi W 10 Mario Stein

Light Heavyweights

Stipe Drews W 12
Antonio Brancalion
Armin Dollinger W 10 Ralf Riemer

Super Middleweights

Mikkel Kessler KO 10 Eric Lucas
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Natascha Ragosina W 10
Dakota Stone
Victor Oganov KO 4
Konstantin Makhankov

Middleweights

William Joppy KO 5 Erik Howard
Dante Craig KO 2 Ray Collins
Jose Santos W 8 Jose Silva
Amin Asikainen KO 6
Walter Fabian Saporiti
Joe Wyatt KO 3 Roland Cummings

Junior Middleweights

Joel Julio KO 3 Robert Kamya
Jessie Davis W 10 Rohan Nanton

Welterweights

Carlos Baldomir W 12 Zab Judah
(*Wins World Title*)
Juan Rubio W 10 Hernan Galaviz
Hussein Chiwa W 10
Ramadhan Miyeyusho
Sergey Stepkin W 10 Luiz da Silva
Victor Ortiz KO 4 Leroy Fountain
Julio Sanchez No-Contest 3
Cesar Valdez
Mark Suarez KO 1 James Webb
Dondon Sultan KO 7 Cesar Dasillo
Turgay Uzun KO 1 Hasan Givan
David Torres KO 2 Rafael Ortiz

Junior Welterweights

Sergey Sorokin KO 12
Diego Martin Alzugaray
Takehiko Toki W 10
Nannam Kiatprasanchai
Juho Tolppola W 10 Ariel Burgos
Kenryo Matsumoto W 10
Ranger Iizuka
Bart Abapo KO 6 Rex Marzan
Marvin Cordova KO 1
Corey Alarcon
Phillemon Banda KO 6
John Masamba

PHOTO BY LARS MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Super middleweight Kessler hones in on Lucas

PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/GETTY IMAGES

Strawweight Kyowa applies a facial to Nakajima

Jose Manjarrez KO 3 Raul Gonzalez
Yosukezan Onodera W 8
Yasuhiro Kondo
Cesar Cuenca W 8 Cristian Paz
Hiroyuki Sakamoto KO 3
Mangkongton Por Songkram

Lightweights

Andrey Devyataykin KO 10
Delshot Abdullaev
Urbano Antillon W 10
Fernando Trejo
Edner Cherry KO 1
Marco Angel Perez
Jose Santa Cruz KO 4
Michael Lozada

Junior Lightweights

Monty Clay W 12 Shamir Reyes
Jorge Solis W 10 Hector Marquez
Takahiro Aoh W 10 Richard Carrillo
Yuki Yoshizawa KO 3
Songkom Jockygym
Jorge Linares KO 1 Jeffrey Onate
Carlos Oliveira KO 1
Edelson Martins
Yusuke Kobori KO 2 Keita Manabe

Featherweights

Masaru Matsumura KO 2
Yoshihisa Tomura
Elio Rojas KO 1 Priest Smalls
Diego Sananco KO 5
Eduardo Zapata

Junior Featherweights

Giovanni Andrade KO 8
Luis Alberto Ocampo
Raul Martinez KO 8
Andres Ledesma
Reidar Walstad KO 5
Ravil Mukhamadiarov

Bantamweights

Katsushige Kawashima KO 5
Petchklongpai Sor Thantip
Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym W 12
Leo Gamez
Tatsuya Tsubouchi W 10
Masahito Igawa
Raul Martinez KO 8
Andres Ledesma
Nobuto Ikehara KO 3
Medgoen Singsurat

Junior Bantamweights

Oscar Andrade W 8 Benito Abraham
Hiroshi Yoshiyama KO 3
Panomdej Or Yuthanakorn

Flyweights

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam Tech.
Win 5 Isidro Balabat
(*Non-Title Bout*)
Panomroonglek Kratingdaenggym
W 12 Celso Danggod
Denkaosan Kaovichit W 12
Jerry Pahayahay
Raul Medina W 10
Adrian Dimas Garzon
Sing Carryboy KO 5
Suriya Klongpajol
Alain Bonnel W 10
Lahcene Zemmouri
Satoshi Takahashi KO 1
Poonsawat Eausampan
Federico Catubay W 10
Louie Bantigue

Junior Flyweights

Ulises Solis W 12 Will Grigsby
(*Wins IBF Title*)
Nadja Loritz KO 2
Tatiana Puchkova

Strawweights

Eagle Kyowa KO 7 Ken Nakajima
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Oleydong Sithsamerchai W 10
Alex Aroy
Manuel Vargas W 10
Humberto Pool
Kazuma Kumada W 10
Hiroshi Matsumoto
Yasutaka Kuroki KO 1
Kemthon Twins Special

O'Neil Bell KO 10 Jean-Marc Mormeck

New York, New York: Bell was certainly aware of the history he would make if he vanquished Mormeck. What fighter from Atlanta, Georgia, like Bell wouldn't be proud to be linked with Evander Holyfield, the future Hall of Famer who calls Atlanta home and held the distinction of becoming the first undisputed cruiserweight champion, in 1988? Facing RING champion Mormeck, Bell, who carried in the IBF title, had an opportunity to unify all three alphabet belts and swipe from Mormeck recognition as the 200-pound division's true ruler.

Bell, 199½, entered the ring a decided underdog despite his noteworthy punching power, thanks in part to the fact that he seemed the beneficiary of a gift decision in May '05 against Dale Brown—a man once stopped by Mormeck. Mormeck, 197¾, Pointe-a-Pitre, France, came into the fight expecting to defend his championship, then move up to heavyweight.

Mormeck, 31-3 (21), will probably now have to reconsider. In front of a crowd of 4,735 at The Theater at Madison Square Garden, Bell, 26-1-1 (23), knocked him out at 2:50 of the 10th round of a very entertaining fight.

Mormeck started well, winning three of the first four rounds on two judges' scorecards. "The Marksman" worked behind an attack that included combination punching and a pressure jab, sometimes forcing Bell into a corner or against the ropes. Mormeck pressed the issue in the fourth, snapping Bell's head back with jabs and power rights. There was even a moment in that round when the volume of Mormeck's punches appeared to have Bell in trouble. But Bell kept punching back.

In the fifth, Bell, 31, started to assert himself. He began using his jab, placing Mormeck in the unusual and uncomfortable position of backing up. The seventh round saw more of the same, as Bell had Mormeck, 33, teetering after a looping right to his temple. As the rounds continued on, Bell's momentum seemed to build, while Mormeck's battery was draining.

According to judges Steve Weisfeld (USA) and Tom Schreck (USA), Bell won rounds seven through nine, and judge Tom Kaczmarek (USA) had "Supernova" winning five straight rounds entering the 10th.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Bell sends Mormeck crashing down to defeat in the 10th round

Mormeck's rubbery legs appeared a little more solid to start the 10th, and he momentarily found an extra gear. But Bell withstood Mormeck's attack and countered with a barrage of his own, turning the sway of the round to his favor. The Jamaica-born Bell cornered Mormeck and waded in with a series of chopping rights off the top and sides of Mormeck's head, as referee Wayne Kelly (USA) looked on the verge of stopping the fight. Then finally, with about 20 seconds left in the round, Bell bounced one more right off Mormeck's head, and the Frenchman crumbled to the canvas and rolled over on his back. Kelly knelt next to Mormeck and stopped the fight at the count of six, making Bell the king of the cruiserweight division.

Possibilities for Bell's first defense include rematches with Mormeck or Brown, but promoter Don King said alphabet mandatory Steve Cunningham was the most likely foe.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Don King Productions**
(1-7-06)
Joe Santoliquito

Ulises Solis W 12 Will Grigsby

New York, New York: Don King labeled his early-January show at The Theater at Madison Square Garden "Undisputed." In hindsight, he should have named it "The Night Of Upsets." Before Carlos Baldomir shocked Zab Judah and O'Neil Bell surprised Jean-Marc Mormeck, defending IBF junior flyweight titlist Grigsby, 107, St. Paul, Minnesota, found himself on the wrong end of a decision against a little-known mandatory challenger who turned out to be much more challenging than most mandatories.

Solis, 108, Guadalajara, Mexico, was only fighting in the United States for the third time. This bout featured small fighters without big names, so it was not shown on TV. And that's a shame, because boxing fans were deprived of seeing an entertaining scrap won by a pint-sized bulldog who never retreated.

The live crowd certainly enjoyed Solis' intensity and aggressive style. The only person in the building who didn't was Grigsby, who, despite bloodying both of Solis' eyes,

[The Ring Fighter of the Month] Presented by EVERLAST

Carlos Baldomir

The story of the tortoise and the hare is a classic children's tale, teaching about the importance of giving your best effort. But nobody ever mistook it for a true story. Yes, it offers a valuable lesson, but come on—a tortoise is never really going to win a race against a hare. This is just fiction.

Or at least it *was* just fiction. On January 7 in New York, it became reality. Zab Judah was the hare—much faster, much more physically capable, but overconfident and easily distracted. Carlos Baldomir was the tortoise—slow and steady, overmatched but determined. And just like in the story, the hare took the race just lightly enough that he could do little at the end but watch his hard-shelled foe cross the finish line a few steps ahead of him.

Baldomir didn't buy into Judah's hype, and he didn't buy into the notion that he was just a tune-up for Judah's fight with Floyd Mayweather. Baldomir, with his journeyman's record and his lowly knockout percentage, came to win. For a little while, in fact, it looked like he was going to knock Judah out. That shocker of an ending didn't quite come to pass, but after 12 rounds, the judges recognized that a different kind of shocker had taken place, and correctly awarded the close unanimous decision to the man billed before the fight as up to a 16-1 underdog.

So you see, slow and steady really can win the race. It can make you the welterweight champion of the world, and it can make you the Fighter of the Month.

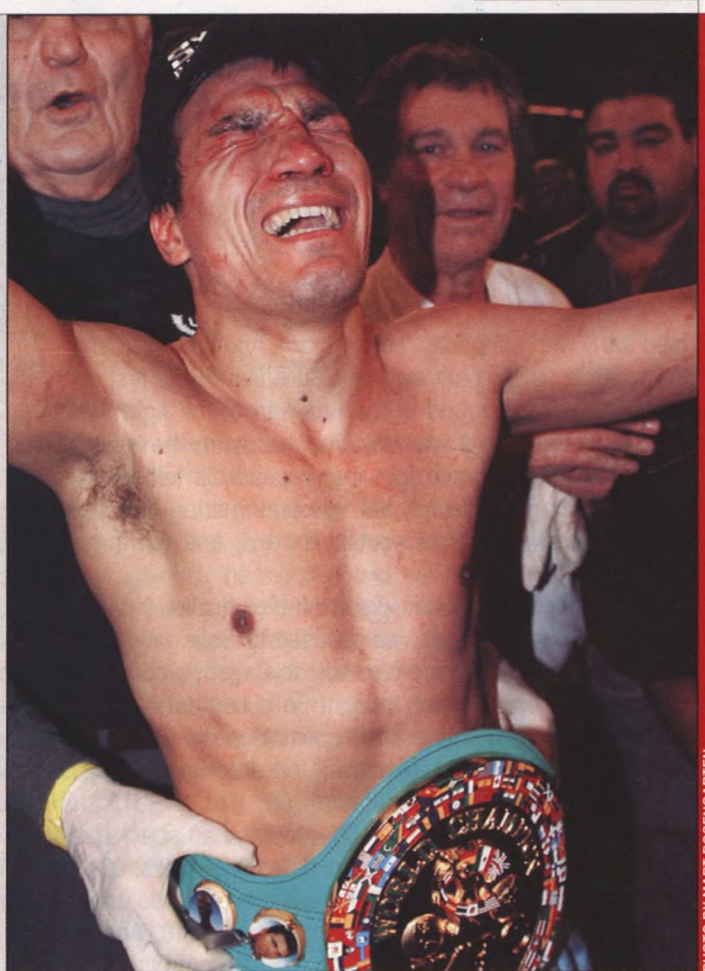


PHOTO BY MART ROSENGARTEN

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Blood-smeared Solis hooks Grigsby and the IBF 108-pound title

still went home without his IBF trinket.

Solis, 24, brought the fight to Grigsby, 35, who struggled early with the pace. Judges Frank Adams (USA) and Wynn Kintz (USA) both awarded Solis five of the first six rounds. The only round in the first half of the fight that Grigsby won clearly was the second, when he nailed Solis with an overhand right that caused his left eye to swell. By the third round, the eye was getting ugly, as blood poured from a cut next to the eye and down the side of his face.

Still, Grigsby could not fully capitalize on the cut. His offense was too sporadic, as opposed to Solis, who kept coming forward, throwing wide shots to Grigsby's body and head. By the sixth round, though, Solis had cuts around both eyes, with a gaping gash opened on his right eyebrow. But the Mexican kept coming forward, winging shots that grew gradually more accurate.

Every time Grigsby, 18-3-1 (7), mounted an attack, his attempts were stopped by the very determined Solis, 20-1-1 (15), and "Archie" took four of the last five rounds on all three judges' scorecards. Kintz scored it 118-110, Adams had it 117-111, and Don Ackerman (USA) scored the fight slightly closer at 116-112 (THE RING had it even closer than that at 115-113), all for the prefight underdog Solis.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Don King Productions**
(1-7-06)
Joe Santoliquito

Jorge Arce KO 10 Adonis Rivas

Monterrey, Mexico: Arce capped a tremendously successful first year in the flyweight division with his 22nd straight win, his fifth straight kayo, and the first of what may be two straight wins over Rivas by the time you read this. Due to a somewhat controversial ending—referee Laurence Cole (USA) stopped the bout at 1:20 of the 10th round on account of a cut near Rivas' right eye that didn't actually look all that bad. Arce and Rivas were scheduled to rematch on January 28, just six weeks after their initial encounter at the Arena Monterrey.

The 26-year-old Arce, 112, Los Mochis, Mexico, scored four kayo wins in '05, all of them over credible foes, a description that certainly fits the veteran Rivas, 112, Leon, Nicaragua, who at one time held a belt at 115 pounds. Rivas

came down from 118½ pounds in his previous fight, meaning Arce, 42-3-1 (32), didn't boast a huge size advantage like he usually does, but "Travieso" still boasted a noteworthy power advantage, dropping Rivas, 21-8-2 (10) with 1 no-contest, after a vicious exchange of punches in round two. But the 33-year-old Nicaraguan refused to succumb, battling back to make an entertaining fight of it.

The bout came to a sudden end in the 10th, when an Arce punch opened the aforementioned cut. The fans made clear that they were not pleased with Cole's decision to wave off the fight, but perhaps they'll get a more conclusive ending in the immediate return match.

Television: **TV Azteca**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(12-16-05)

Lorenzo Parra W 12
Brahim Asloum

Paris, France: Much had been promised by the 2000 Olympic gold medalist at light flyweight, Asloum. The first French fighter to win Olympic gold in 64 years—Jean Despeaux and Roger Michelot had done the same at middleweight and light heavyweight, respectively, in the 1936 Games in Berlin—he had been anointed as a possible successor to the brilliant Marcel Cerdan and Georges Carpentier. But Parra, 111¼, Aragua, Venezuela, proved just too strong, and Asloum, 112, Bourgoin Jaillieu, France, suffered a humbling fate—and his first defeat—at the Palais Omnisports in his challenge for the WBA flyweight title.

PHOTO BY MEHDI FEDOUACH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Happy Parra after handing glum Asloum his first pro defeat

The European flyweight champion had faced capable fighters in Alexander Mahmutov, Noel Arambulet, Zolile Mbityi, and Ivan Pozo, but he discovered that Parra operates at a different level. The Venezuelan is a good boxer who can punch hard. He knocked down Eric Morel before winning on points to claim the belt in December 2003 and has not been afraid to take his title on the road, beating three challengers in Japan and another in Korea before he faced Asloum. "I will fight anywhere in the world because I believe I can beat anybody," Parra declared after his display of dominance over the 26-year-old Frenchman.

Asloum's plan was to box, but he seemed to be knocked out of his stride as early as the first round when a clash of heads opened a cut over his right eye. The 27-year-old Parra's strength was also a major factor. A combination of punches in the second put Asloum down. He was up early in American referee Mark Nelson's count, but the knockdown and the flow of blood clearly dispirited him. It became a long and winding road to the final bell for the Frenchman.

Gamely, he mounted strong surges at various intervals, most notably in the fifth round. But Parra, 27-0 (17), was always only several good punches away from asserting his authority again. In the eighth round, he hurt Asloum, 19-1 (7), with left hooks, but the challenger managed to hang on grimly. He even looked for the big blow that might swing the fight his way over the closing rounds, but it proved a forlorn task. No one believed that he had done anywhere near enough when the final bell rang, least of all himself.

Judge Philippe Verbeke (Belgium) had it 118-109, Levi Martinez (USA) 119-108, and Guillermo Pérez Pineda (Panama) 120-107, all for Parra. THE RING also scored for Parra, 119-108.

(12-5-05)
Promoter: **Michel Acaries**
Brian Doogan

PHOTO BY CHRISTAIN FISCHER/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Referee Samuel Viruet saves Ikeke from additional punishment

Arthur Abraham KO 5 Kingsley Ikeke

Leipzig, Germany: The main man in the middleweights may be Jermain Taylor, but Abraham, 158¾, Berlin, Germany, via Yerevan, Armenia, served emphatic notice with a fifth-round stoppage of Ikeke, 158¾, Toronto, Ontario, via Benin City, Nigeria, that he is not to be discounted. Freddie Roach, Ikeke's trainer, believed his fighter was beginning to warm to the task when he was caught by the blows that caused his downfall, but 3,500 fans inside the Leipzig Arena were convinced from the start that the vacant IBF middleweight title (freshly stripped from Taylor) was destined for the Armenian.

The undefeated European titleholder had proved himself capable of mixing in the highest company when he outpointed respected veteran Howard Eastman in July '05. Though giving up six inches in height to the 6'4" Ikeke, Abraham was the aggressor from the outset and his confidence led to the successful strategy that simply overwhelmed the Nigerian. "He's very strong and he earned the win," Ikeke said magnanimously. "I had visualized something else, but the final punch surprised me. Up until then I saw myself even."

Ikeke was caught by good shots early, and Abraham just never let up. Seizing the initiative with hard left hooks to the body, he began to time the right hand over Ikeke's long left jab superbly and landed solidly against the Nigerian's jaw. His defense was tight too, and he never allowed the sharp-punching Ikeke's fists to be a factor. Boxing was not doing it for the lanky 32-year-old either because Abraham never allowed him time and space to settle into a rhythm. The Armenian's fast pace and combination punches progressively increased the frustration and anxiety level in Ikeke.

In the third round, Ikeke smiled when his 25-year-old opponent fired another burst of blows that penetrated his guard, but there was not a hint of pleasure in his expression. He knew he was being beaten to the punch and he realized too, that he was struggling to find a way to retaliate effectively. At last he found a way in the fourth, backing Abraham to the ropes and slamming in several right hands, but Abraham took the shots well. "He said to me that I should have a go at it," the Armenian revealed later. "So I brought my fists down to say to him, 'Come on if you're so courageous.' I showed him that he couldn't impress or intimidate me."

And in the fifth, Abraham showed an impressive finishing instinct. A right hand and a big left hook staggered Ikeke, 23-2 (13), who retreated into the ropes. Another right hand landed on the button, and referee Samuel Viruet (USA) dived in just as Ikeke pitched forward and fell to the

canvas, sending the crowd and Abraham into delirium.

"In Armenia, there isn't even enough food to go around the population. No one thought I was capable of getting to where I am today, but my goal has always been to become a champion," said an emotional Abraham, 19-0 (17). "I will fight everyone I have to fight to make it happen. I don't want any easy fights. Jermain Taylor is my number-one target and I'll go to America to fight, just like Max Schmeling and the Klitschkos did. I want to show that I'm the best middleweight in the world."

(12-10-05)

Promoter: **Wilfried Sauerland**

Brian Doogan

Ivan Calderon W 12 Daniel Reyes

San Juan, Puerto Rico: "Iron Boy" Calderon is never going to provide the excitement or the knockout endings to remind anyone of his countryman Felix Trinidad. But as he reminded us in what was on paper his toughest test to date, facing former strawweight titleholder Reyes at Coliseo Roberto Clemente, he doesn't need to be exciting or powerful to be successful. The undefeated WBO minimumweight titleholder added another near-shutout decision to his resume, inching closer to deserving recognition as the top 105-pounder in the sport.

Southpaw Calderon, 104, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, piled up points with his jab, movement, and boxing skills as he usually does, and never let Reyes, 104½, Cartegena, Colombia, sneak into the fight, as the 30-year-old Calderon has occasionally let opponents do in the later rounds. This was Calderon's first fight against an opponent rated in THE RING'S top 10 coming into the bout, and he elevated his game appropriately, losing just one round on one card against the 33-year-old Colombian (though it should be noted, before too much is made of the victory, that Reyes had lost two of his last three coming in).

Judges Nelson Vasquez (Puerto Rico) and Victor Salomon (Puerto Rico) both scored 120-109 for Calderon, and Eugenia Williams (USA) had it 119-109. With the win, Calderon moves to 24-0 (5), while Reyes slips to 34-4-1 (29). The busy Iron Boy was scheduled for another defense of his belt in February, against another top-10-rated former beltholder, Isaac Bustos.

Promoter: **Top Rank**

(12-10-05)

Danny Williams W 12 Audley Harrison

London, England: Olympic gold medal glory in Sydney in 2000 was but a memory as Harrison's professional career, which he had predicted would lead to the pinnacle of the world heavyweight crown, collapsed in a heap of humiliation at the ExCel Arena. Williams, London, England, who was British champion when his fellow Londoner announced at the start of his career that he could win the British title inside five fights, delivered a damning verdict in a shockingly substandard bout that discredited both men.

Fireworks had been anticipated by the 15,000-strong capacity crowd and the TV audience of 8 million that tuned into British terrestrial television channel ITV. But after the exciting hors d'oeuvre served up by Amir Khan, Olympic silver medalist at lightweight in 2004, the main event was gastronomic goo. Boos cascaded down to the ring, and people who had paid up to £2,000 ($3,000) for a ringside seat on the black market got up and walked out in disgust.

"He didn't want to fight," Williams, 34-4 (28), said of Harrison, 19-1 (14). "He was scared and didn't want to get hit. I tried to make a fight of it, but I couldn't get my distance because he kept running away. When it came right down to it, Audley Harrison didn't have the bottle."

That he lost to a fighter whose best win had come against the empty vessel of Mike Tyson in 2004, who had been exposed brutally by Vitali Klitschko in a world title challenge, who had not even trained properly for this fight (revealing afterward that he had prepared alone and not worked with trainer Jim McDonnell) said everything about Harrison's limitations. From striking gold at super heavyweight in Sydney, he had allowed his career to stagnate to the point of widespread derision, which reached a crescendo when we barely were witness to a fight at all until the final three rounds.

From the opening round, Harrison, 253, was gripped by a caution that proved corrosive and steadily massaged Williams' fragile confidence. The action was desperately sporadic, Harrison content to simply extend a pawing jab. This allowed Williams, 272, to seize the initiative in the opening rounds, and in the fourth he even began to rip in short, powerful punches reminiscent of those with which he overcame Tyson. But this was a fight a long way from being reminiscent of the Williams-Tyson thriller.

By the middle rounds, the crowd's patience had worn thin. "What a load of rubbish," they chanted from the farthest corners of the arena. Many left before the drama of the last three rounds.

A battery of bodyblows hurt Harrison early in the 10th before Williams, 32, launched a right-hand haymaker that landed on the left side of Harrison's face. The 34-year-old was knocked on the seat of his pants for the first time in his professional life, and the glazed look in his eyes when he got up suggested that the end was in sight. If he is due any credit at all, it is that he managed to find a way to survive. He even came back in the 11th to rock Williams to his boots with two big left hands. Two more punches might have finished the job, but Harrison missed wildly before they swapped leather seriously—and belatedly—throughout the final round. Harrison had predicted that he was the man to put the "Great" back into British boxing, but Williams' retort that he wasn't fit to "put a grate in a fireplace" summed up the night.

Mark Green scored for Harrison 114-113, but Terry O'Connor and Phil Edwards saw it for Williams, 116-112 and 116-113, respectively. All three judges were from England, as was referee Dave Parris. THE RING scored for

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Harrison goes down in the 10th round of boring loss to Williams

Williams, 116-112.

"It was a close fight and no excuses, but I hurt my left hand in the third round and was a one-handed fighter after that," said Harrison. "It was a bad performance by me, but I take it on the chin and I will come back."

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Sports Network**
(12-10-05)
Brian Doogan

Rocky Juarez KO 3 Reynaldo Hurtado

Corpus Christi, Texas: Coming off his disappointing loss to Humberto Soto back in August, this didn't figure to be much of a fight for Juarez. The 2000 Olympic silver medalist needed a win, not a war.

Mission accomplished.

Juarez, 127, Houston, Texas, did manage to work up a sweat before a crowd of 2,200 at the American Bank Center. But beyond that? Hurtado, 128, Cartagena, Colombia, had lost four straight coming into the fight, to Jose Navarro, Fernando Montiel, Mauricio Martinez, and Tim Austin. The latter three came via knockout. On a night when five area greats—Lefty Barrera, Jesse Benavides, Roberto Elizondo, Lupe Suarez, and Frankie Warren—were inducted into the newly formed Corpus Christi Boxing Hall of Fame, Juarez took care of business the way top fighters are supposed to against lesser opposition.

Perhaps the only question entering this bout was how the 5'5" Juarez would handle the height of his 5'11" opponent. But that proved an easy riddle to solve. Juarez found Hurtado's midsection to be an inviting target. He pounded Hurtado to the body from the opening bell, often pinning the 35-year-old on the ropes and hammering away with combinations.

A lunging left hook to the side of Hurtado's face in the second was the beginning of a decisive round for Juarez, 25, and the beginning of the end for Hurtado. Juarez, 24-1 (17), opened the third with another left hook to the chin. A shorter left hook followed by an uppercut sent Hurtado, 37-9-1 (28), to the canvas, and referee Jerry McKenzie (USA) into his count. Before he reached the count of 10, seeing that Hurtado was hurt and unable to continue, McKenzie halted the bout at the 1:13 mark of the third.

"I went into this fight pretty eager and anxious, coming off a loss," Juarez said. "A fighter never wants to go through that again. So there was a lot of tension going into the ring, but you try to overcome it by pumping yourself up, making yourself confident that you're going to knock the guy out."

Promoter: **Main Events**
(12-9-05)
John Whisler

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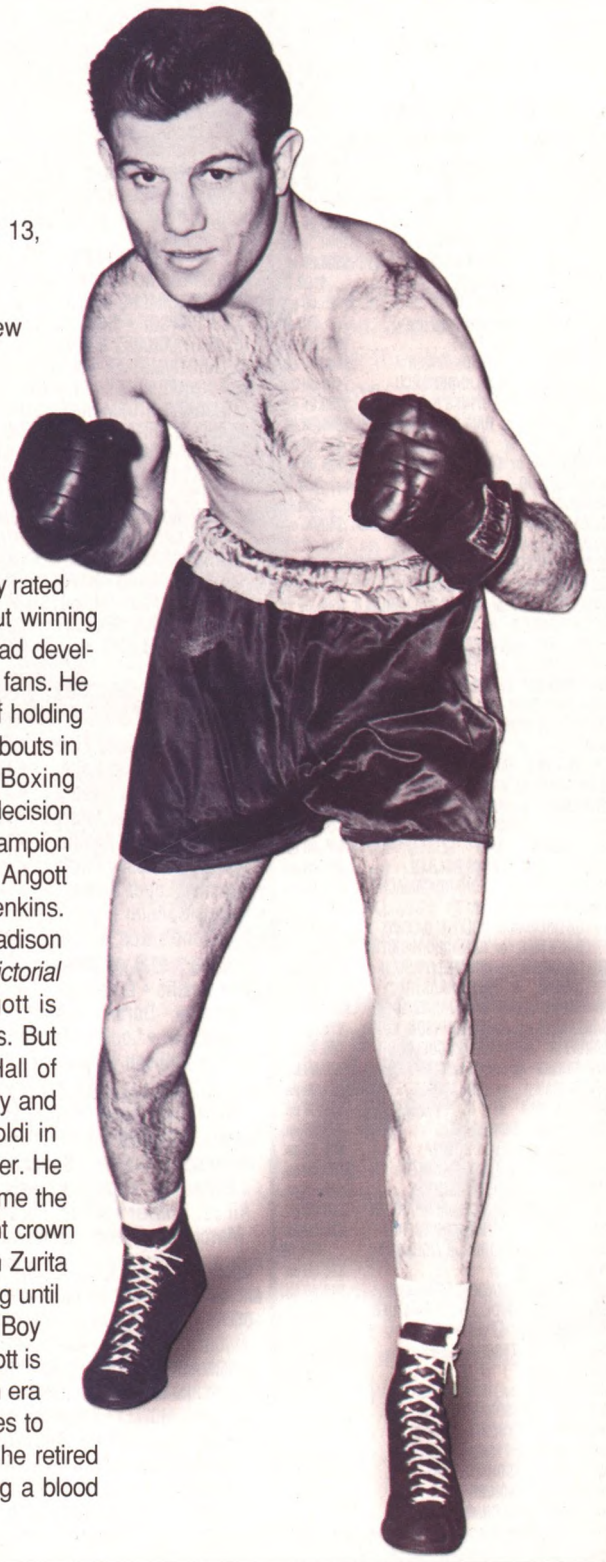
Hall of Fame Profile

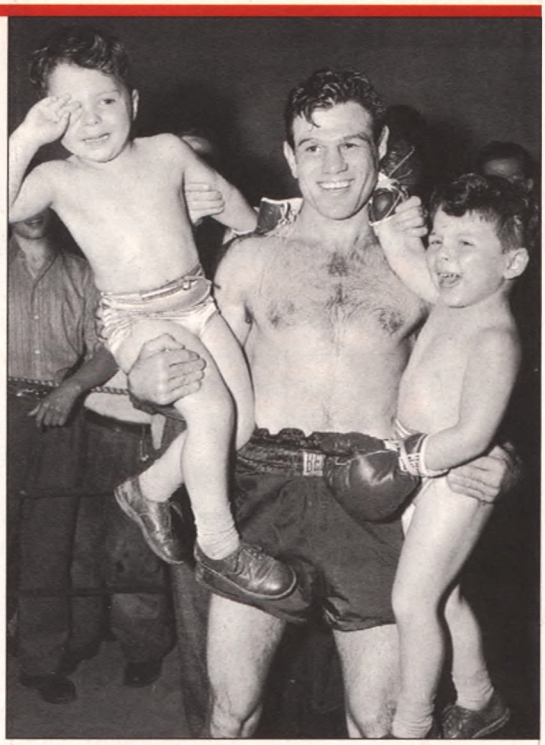
A thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

Sammy Angott

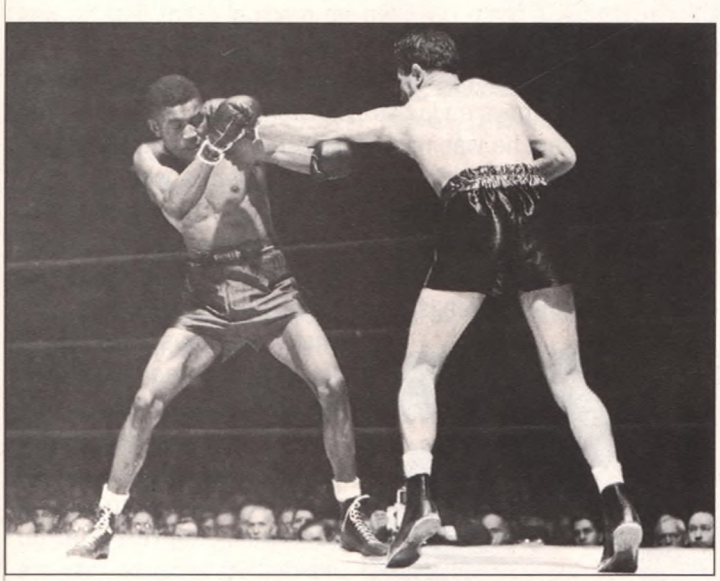


Nickname: The Clutch
Birthdate: January 17, 1915
Birthplace: Washington, Pennsylvania
Weight Class: Lightweight
Height: 5'8"
Professional Record: 98-27-8 (22)
Titles: World Lightweight (December 19, 1941-November 13, 1942), NBA Lightweight (May 3, 1940-November 13, 1942; October 27, 1943-March 8, 1944)
Best Performances: Leo Rodak (KO 1, W 10), Lew Jenkins (W 15), Bob Montgomery (W 10, W 12, W 12), Ike Williams (KO 6), Willie Pep (W 10), Petey Sarron (W 10), Freddie Miller (W 10), Slugger White (W 15), Beau Jack (D 10)
Year of IBHOF Induction: 1998
Background: Born Salvatore Engotti, Angott turned pro in March 1935 as a featherweight. He lost 10 bouts during his first three years, but in '38 he fought a trio of bouts with highly rated featherweight contender Leo Rodak, losing the first match, but winning the next two to establish himself as a force. By then Angott had developed a very effective style, but not one that world endear him to fans. He was a quick, clever boxer with plenty of spunk, but his habit of holding earned him his well-deserved nickname. Angott won nine of 10 bouts in '39, and the following year captured the vacant National Boxing Association's version of the lightweight title with a 15-round decision over Davey Day in a fight refereed by former heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey, who was also the sole judge. In December '41, Angott unified the 135-pound title by outpointing hard-hitting Lew Jenkins. Although he beat Jenkins with relative ease, the crowd at Madison Square Garden booed him for not going for a knockout. In *A Pictorial History Of Boxing* by Sam Andre and Nat Fleischer, Angott is described as "the first unpopular king" of the lightweight class. But despite his lack of appeal, Angott defeated several future Hall of Famers in the first half of the 1940s, including Bob Montgomery and Ike Williams. Angott successfully defended against Aldo Spoldi in September '42, and then announced his retirement in November. He was, however, soon back in action, and in March '43, he became the first ever to beat Willie Pep. Angott regained the NBA lightweight crown by outpointing Slugger White in October, only to lose it to Juan Zurita in March '44. Angott was starting to slip by then, but kept fighting until August 8, 1950, when he lost a 10-round decision to Sonny Boy West in his final bout. His unpopular style notwithstanding, Angott is now remembered for tackling darn near all of the top men in an era overpopulated with great fighters, including three decision losses to Ray Robinson. Angott worked for a manufacturing plant after he retired from the ring, and on October 22, 1980, he died after suffering a blood clot on the brain.

Angott (left) is pictured in a rare toe-to-toe exchange with Lew Jenkins during their lightweight unification bout. There was no doubt that "The Clutch" deserved the unanimous decision, but fans were unhappy with the new champ's lack of a killer instinct.



Angott clowns around with his unhappy looking twin nephews, Sammy and Jimmy Serio, in a publicity shot taken at Stillman's Gym while Angott was training for his 1943 bout with Henry Armstrong.



Angott pumps a left jab into the face of Bob Montgomery, one of the numerous future Hall of Famers he beat during his 15-year pro career.

Nat Fleischer, THE RING's founder and editor, presents Angott with his championship belt shortly after the Jenkins bout.

Soldiers at Keesler Field in Mississippi greet Angott, who was attending a boxing card at the base that was attended by approximately 5,000 servicemen.

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Joe Mesi And The Federal Suspension List

Due to a recent court ruling, there is an excellent chance that heavyweight Joe Mesi will fight again, despite suffering a brain injury in his last bout. Let's take a look at what happened, why a judge ruled the way he did, and what it means for both Mesi and boxers in general.

On March 13, 2004, Mesi won a 10-round decision against Vassiliy Jirov in Las Vegas, Nevada. Jirov knocked Mesi down twice in the ninth round and once in the 10th round. The following week, news reports revealed that Mesi was diagnosed with a concussion. The Nevada State Athletic Commission (NSAC) then placed Mesi on a medical suspension and required him to be seen and cleared by a neurologist and/or neurosurgeon and undergo a repeat MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) of the brain.

According to his treating physicians, Mesi demonstrated abnormal neurological findings, and an initial MRI of his brain performed March 17, 2004, showed two subdural hematomas (bleeding on the surface of the brain). Although there appeared to be re-bleeding on a follow-up MRI conducted April 8, 2004, the subdurals had completely reabsorbed by May 27, 2004 (or approximately 45 days after the initial injury).

NSAC regulations stipulate that it will not issue or renew a license to a fighter who has sustained a cerebral hemorrhage, and when the NSAC's Medical Advisory Board met on April 18, 2005, it unanimously agreed that Mesi was not medically fit to box and that the suspension be maintained. The decision was based on the fact that most boxing deaths are from subdural hematomas and that Mesi's team provided no medical proof that he was not at increased risk.

In an appeal presented to the NSAC on June 9, 2005, Mesi's attorneys and physicians again had no medical data proving that he was not predisposed to recurrent bleeding, nor did they provide examples of fighters who had sustained subdurals and then safely returned to the ring. Instead, comparisons were made to other sports such as football, hockey, and auto racing, all of which involve wearing a helmet, which is hardly a valid comparison to a sport where numerous blows to the an unprotected head are absorbed.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

The ref sends Jirov to a neutral corner while Mesi struggles to regain his feet

Some experts theorize that by the very nature of the sport, boxers may frequently have such injuries that go undetected because they are not scanned after each fight. However, in a 10-year period, the NSAC has performed somewhere in the neighborhood of 800 postfight head CT's on fighters. Less than 10 boxers showed bleeding; six of who died.

Still, Mesi persisted in his attempt to box again and another hearing was held on December 19, 2005, before Nevada State Court Judge Douglas Herndon. During the hearing, Chief Deputy Attorney General Keith Kizer entered into evidence a documented case of Stephan Johnson, who was knocked out by Fitz Vanderpool in

Toronto, Canada, on April 14, 1999. Johnson's postfight head CT demonstrated a subdural hematoma. Unfortunately, Johnson's suspension slipped through the cracks, and he fought three more times in other jurisdictions, eventually dying of additional head injuries 15 days after being knocked out by Paul Vaden on November 20, 1999.

Subsequently, the Professional Boxing Safety Act of 1996 was amended to stipulate that only the suspending state could take a boxer off medical suspension.

But regardless of the dangers to Mesi, Judge Herndon determined that because every Nevada boxer's license expires on December 31 of the issuing year, a boxer's license cannot be medically suspended beyond that date due to the lack of a license. There exists nothing in Nevada statutes that say that a medical suspension outlasts the expiration of a boxing license.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Hopefully, Mesi will not suffer the same fate as Johnson (left) did against Vaden

Therefore, Mesi can now seek a boxing license even though the judge did not believe his medical experts proved that he was medically fit to return to boxing. This is so, even though Judge Herndon also agreed that the NSAC gave Mesi a fair hearing and that the NSAC had substantial evidence to support each of its factual findings and legal conclusions.

Bruce C. Spizler, chairman of the Association of Boxing Commissions' Legal Committee, noted the dire effect of the judge's decision in the Mesi case on the effective regulation of professional boxing throughout the United States. According to Tim Lueckenhoff, ABC president, "This decision, if applied across the country, would mean that 90 percent or more of the boxers on the Federal Suspension List are now eligible to apply for a license and possibly obtain a license from a boxing commission. Boxing commissions are charged with the responsibility to protect the health, safety, and welfare of boxers. This rule effectively denies them the right to tell a boxer they cannot participate due to a medical condition or injury."

In response to the judge's decision, the ABC sent a memorandum to each of the ABC's 57 member boxing commissions directing them to carefully consider all of the facts and circumstances relating to a previously issued indefinite or permanent medical suspension before granting or denying a fighter's application for licensure.

All too often, fighters receive inadequate suspensions. We cannot ignore the fact that fighting too often, when injured or unprepared, is the major cause not only of death in the ring, but also of chronic injuries and poor performance. One of the reasons this happens is that fighters often fear that if they do not accept a fight date, irrespective of their current medical fitness, they will never receive another offer, especially regarding televised contests.

I completely agree with Mr. Spizler that, "Noting the absence of uniformity in the multiple boxing jurisdictions and the resultant opportunity of 'venue shopping' suggested that the Mesi case is yet another example that 'screams out' for the enactment of federal legislation."

Judge Herndon's decision shows that fighters are still at great risk.

Should a commission no longer license fights the last quarter of the year because it results in inadequate suspensions? Or should we accept that a fighter could be knocked out on December 31, yet be licensed to fight elsewhere New Year's Day?

One has to remember Mesi's fight with Jirov was only 10 rounds. If the fight had gone another two rounds, a legal case as to whether or not Mesi should be allowed to fight may not have been necessary!

It is my firm belief that Mesi has demonstrated a predisposition to further cerebral hemorrhages. It is rare enough for a fighter to have one, let alone two on the same night. I hope I am incorrect. This proof can come only from long-term investigative studies as to the actual frequency of such injuries. No matter what the circumstances, a boxer must prove his medical fitness.

Boxing is still a sport. It will have inherent dangers, but to ignore the attempt to make it as safe as possible and to allow fighters to compete with a predisposition to a life-threatening problem is not a sport, but a game of Russian roulette. ■

[Come Out Writing]

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Zab Zapped

I hope the myth of Zab Judah's maturity has been dispelled after his performance against Carlos Baldomir. Judah is still the same guy we saw melt down in Las Vegas four years ago against Kostya Tszyu.

GABRIEL SIGUEIROS
Modesto, CA

Zab Judah's postfight comments about Don King were pathetic. King may be a lot of things, but for Judah to blame him for his loss to Carlos Baldomir is low. It's not King's fault that Judah took lightly a fighter who hasn't lost in more than six years. I'm not saying King ought to be canonized, because like everyone else in the business, including the fighters, I'm sure he has his fair share of skeletons in his closet. I highly doubt, however, that he's got some magical power that stops seemingly adult men from functioning intelligently.

JONATHAN BAPTISTE
New York, NY

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY A. CLARY/GETTY IMAGES

Carlos Baldomir celebrates at the end of the 12th round of his upset victory over welterweight champion Zab Judah. Gabriel Sigueiros and John Baptiste were among the many readers who were disappointed with Judah both during and after the fight.

Standing Eight Debate

I have always been an advocate of the standing eight-count. It gives the referee an opportunity to evaluate the fighter, and the fighter an opportunity to clear his head. Moreover, it takes some of the pressure off the referee and helps to prevent injury to the fighter. I see no downside. Why have all of the boxing organizations done away with this useful tool?

BRIAN KEY
Pineville, KY

[Editor's note: There are several arguments against the standing eight-count: 1) It could deprive the boxer who is landing the blow(s) of his/her only chance of victory. 2) More often than not, the boxer taking the standing eight-count absorbs additional punishment and would be better off if the fight was stopped. 3) The standing eight-count is ripe for abuse by incompetent or biased referees.]

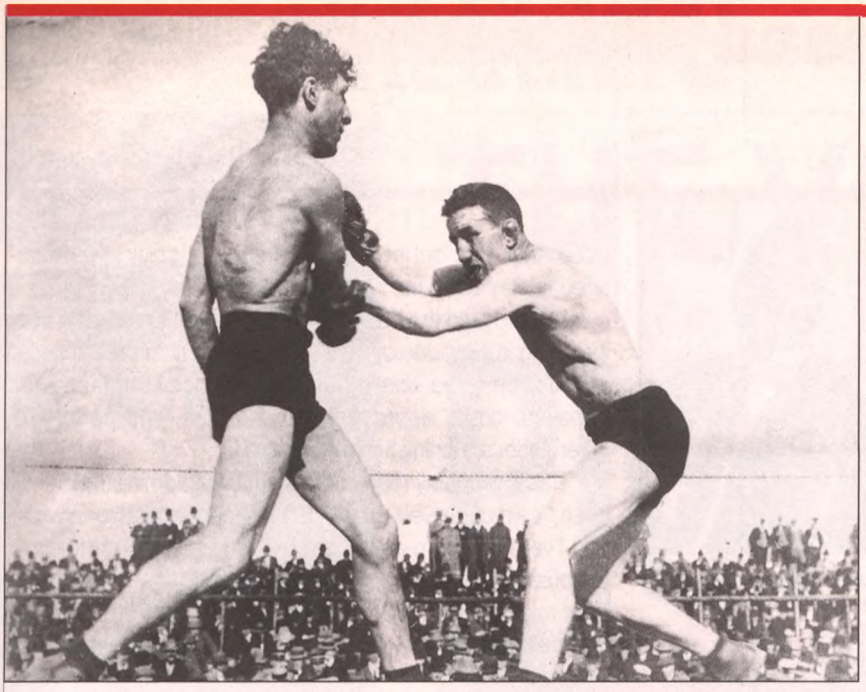
Fitting Tribute

I just wanted to congratulate Don Stradley on the Jesus Chavez-Leavander Johnson article ("Anguished Cries After Johnson's Death") in February 2006 issue of THE RING EXTRA. In my four years of reading your magazine, it was one of the best articles I've read and a fitting tribute to Johnson.

TOM MacDONALD
Perth, Scotland

Will New Year Bring New Champ?

I see by looking at THE RING's current top-10 rankings that Chris Byrd, Hasim Rahman, and James Toney are the top three heavyweights in the world



Historian Steve Nicolaisen wrote to inform THE RING that the caption on one of the photos in Abe Atell's "Hall Of Fame Profile" was incorrect. The bloody battle originally identified as the 20-round draw with Tommy Murphy was actually a photo of 20-round decision won by Murphy. This photo (above) is of the draw, with Atell on the left.

today. With a proposed fight between Rahman and Toney taking place in March, perhaps the winner can take on Chris Byrd. In accordance with THE RING's established rules for filling a world championship vacancy, we could conceivably have a legitimate world heavyweight champion in 2006.

Incidentally, because Don King has recently lost a lawsuit to keep contractual hold of Rahman, is being sued by Chris Byrd, and has only limited promotional interest James Toney, King has relatively little legal control over these top heavies, which will hopefully make creating a fight for THE RING heavyweight championship a little easier.

HAKIM RASHEED
Pittsburgh, PA

Attell Adjustment

A nitpick about Abe Attell's "Hall Of Fame Profile" in THE RING DOUBLE, March 2006: The blood-splattered photo of Attell and "Harlem" Tommy Murphy is from their first 1912 meeting, on March 9, which Murphy won via 20-round decision, *not* their considerably less-gory 20-round draw on August 3 of the same year. In 1970, when I was still in high school, I met an old-time trainer and manager named Tommy O'Leary who saw the March 1912 fight and called it "the bloodiest fight I ever saw. They bled like a couple of stuck pigs."

STEVE NICOLAISEN
nicolaisen_steven@hotmail.com

Loves New Look

I have been a subscriber to THE RING magazine for several years. I received the March 2006 issue a few days ago, and the new look is sensational. The new graphics look terrific and I love the addition of "Opening Shot." Now I'll look forward even more to each issue and the great articles and photos inside.

GLENN McBRADY
St. Louis, MO

Rating Ruiz

I hate to question your ratings, but how can John Ruiz remain rated fifth overall in the heavyweight division with his conqueror, Nikolay Valuev, the new WBA champion, sitting at 10th? This confuses me greatly. Since when does a winner remain beneath the vanquished boxer in the rankings, particularly when there's a championship (alphabet, mind you) involved? Please elaborate.

DAVID NEIMAN
Toronto, ON

[Editor's note: There's always a problem rating a fighter who wins a controversial decision, as Valuev did against both Ruiz and Larry Donald. Brian Doogan, our man at ringside in Berlin, scored it for Ruiz, 115-113, and the crowd also voiced its displeasure. Had THE RING belt been at stake, we would have had no choice but to honor the decision and install Valuev as champion, but as it was the WBA belt he won, that wasn't the case. Even so, we couldn't completely ignore the decision, and decided on a compromise that recognized Valuev's win, but did not penalize Ruiz too severely for what seems by all accounts a bad decision. ■

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Nikolay Valuev sends the sweat flying off John Ruiz' head during their WBA title bout that Valuev won via controversial decision. Reader David Neiman wrote, asking for an explanation as to why Ruiz is still rated above Valuev in THE RING Ratings.

Looking Ahead

By Joe Santoliquito

Revamped Jersey Commission Looks Good To Hazzard

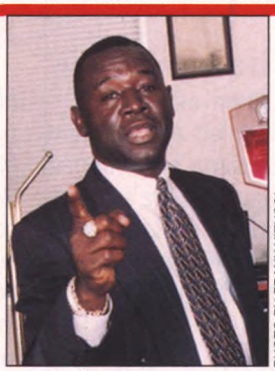


PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Hazzard keeps the New Jersey State Commission in line

Acting New Jersey Governor **Richard Codey** signed a bill on January 12 returning the State Athletic Control Board chairman position to a part-time job. And long-time boxing commissioner **Larry Hazzard** couldn't be more pleased.

The new bill means the board, a three-member politically appointed body that oversees rule changes and appeals, is finally back to being run as it should, which, according to Hazzard, should mean good things for New Jersey boxing going forward.

Codey appointed former referee **Tony Orlando** to the chairman's post, with Hazzard's loud approval. Prior to Orlando, the position was held by **Gerard Gormley**, the brother of Atlantic County state senator **William L. Gormley**. Gerard Gormley had been promoted to full-time status in January 2002 by former Acting Governor Donald DiFrancesco, with an $80,000 annual salary, up from the $10,000 the post originally paid.

But Gerard Gormley, who held the post for 18 years, was forced to resign on March 17, 2004, amid controversy. He allegedly used SACB credentials to 28 boxing cards in the state over a 17-month period for family members, friends, and politicians. Gormley never admitted guilt or innocence in the matter, but did repay $14,000 to numerous promoters for using the unjustified ringside credentials.

"I applaud the move making the position part-time again and placing Orlando there," Hazzard said. "The board has three members and they meet when I want them to meet. Those positions have always been part-time positions, but one of the board members was a converted full-time member. In my opinion, that wasn't putting boxing first.

"My track record shows that in 21 years in this position that I've made decisions that have put boxing first. But when the state decided they wanted to play politics with the sport of boxing, they made a shambles of our agency. They tried to politicize boxing and they failed. Gormley knew absolutely nothing about the sport of boxing, in my opinion. It's a board that has always functioned well, with the exception of one individual that was out of place, but through politics, he managed to stay there for 18 years."

Hazzard said the board plays an integral role in how boxing is run in New Jersey. Though they are politically appointed positions, the board has served specific roles as an appellate court, approved rule changes, and performed other various administrative duties.

"This is probably the strongest that this administration has been," said a relieved Hazzard. "I've been around for a while, and I've seen them come and go. One thing that I know is the business of boxing. Under my tenure, there have been a lot of rule changes. We always tried to do what was best and this hasn't been easy. We're a strong organization again."

Listen Up

Oscar De La Hoya is coming off the longest layoff in his career, but it looks as if "The Golden Boy" isn't making his ring return against a cupcake opponent. There were strong indications that De La Hoya would be climbing into the ring against WBA junior middleweight titlist **Ricardo Mayorga**, the Nicaraguan wild man who won the vacant WBC title by pummeling **Michele Piccirillo** in August 2005. De La Hoya and Mayorga were looking at a May 6 date, with a site and city that had not been determined as of press time.

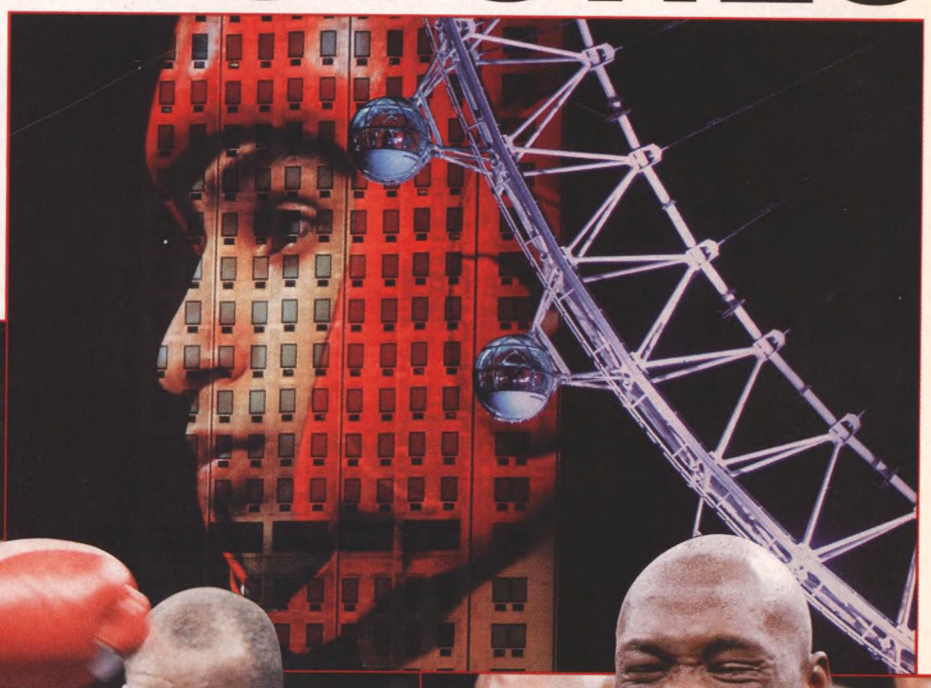
For De La Hoya, 37-4 (29), the fight will mark the first time he'll be in the ring since losing to **Bernard Hopkins** on July 18, 2004. It was the first time in his professional career that De La Hoya had been stopped, and left an image of De La Hoya writhing in pain on the canvas after absorbing a devastating bodyshot.

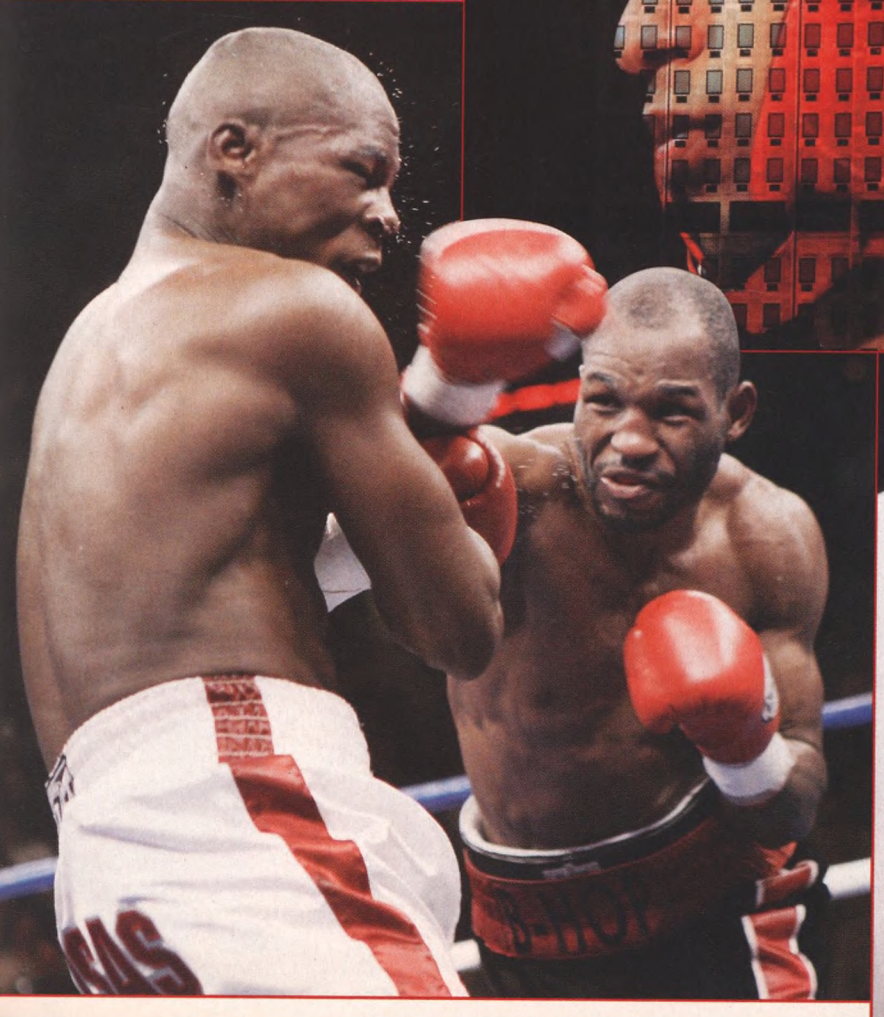
Mayorga, 28-5-1 (23), may be the perfect foil for De La Hoya. "El Matador" comes straight forward and his caveman style could be easy pickings for The Golden Boy's splendid jab. But one lingering question looms: What version of De La Hoya will show up? With a business empire to fall back on after his ring career is over, will De La Hoya have the motivation to train hard and moxie to keep pressing on if Mayorga proves more difficult than anticipated? ■

De La Hoya goes from facing Hopkins (left) in his last bout to fighting wild man Mayorga (right), possibly in May

The RING PRESENTS

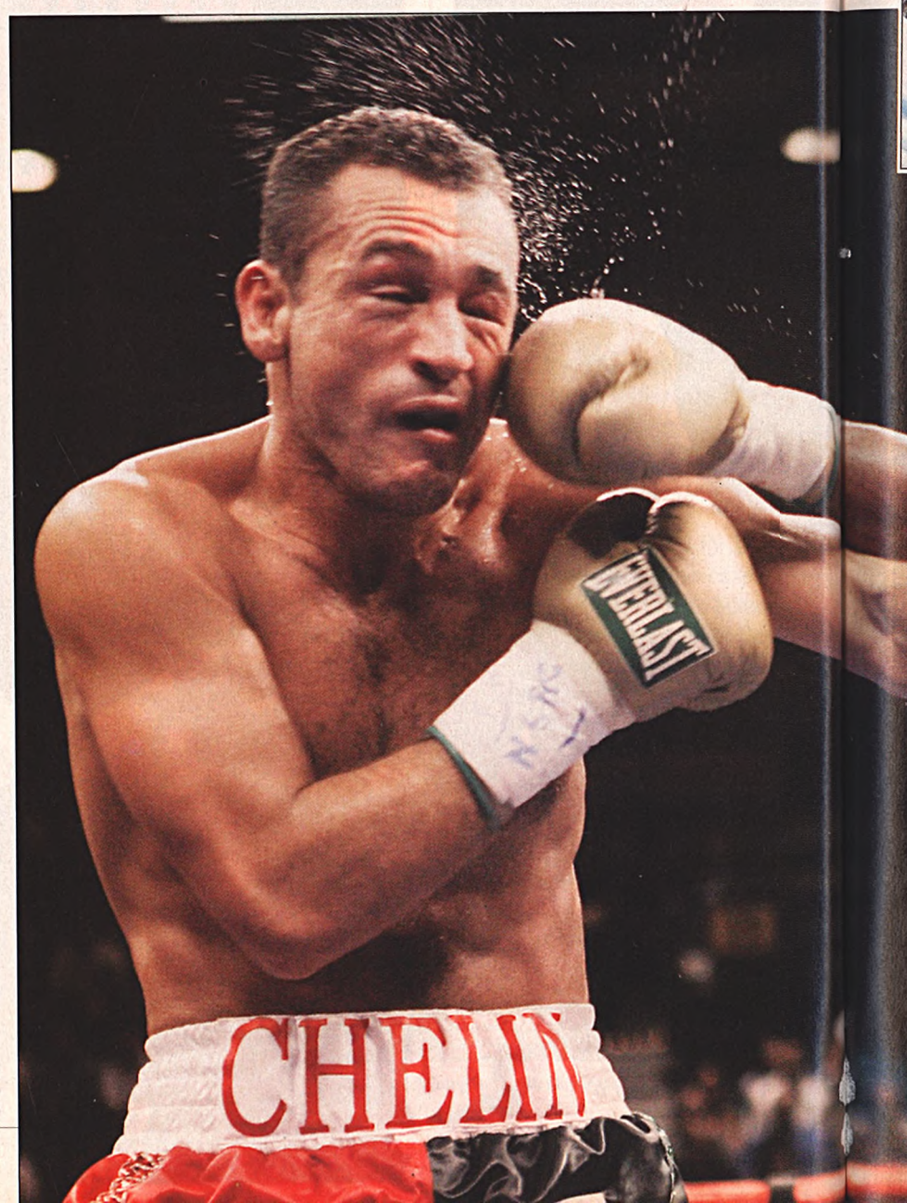
THE YEAR IN PICTURES





KNUCKLE SANDWICH

Arturo Gatti likes to joke that he loves boxing because the ring is the only place where he can hit somebody "and not get in trouble." This comment is generally accompanied by a semi-embarrassed chuckle, because Gatti, like most of us, understands that hitting somebody is frowned upon by much of society and generally not considered a cause for glee. But for the boxer throwing the punch and the fans watching, there's nothing more enjoyable that a good shot upside the head. So here, for all who revel in such stuff, is a collection of some of the Sweet Science's biggest "hits" of 2005.



Eric Harding (left) W 12 Daniel Judah, Uncasville, Connecticut, October 21

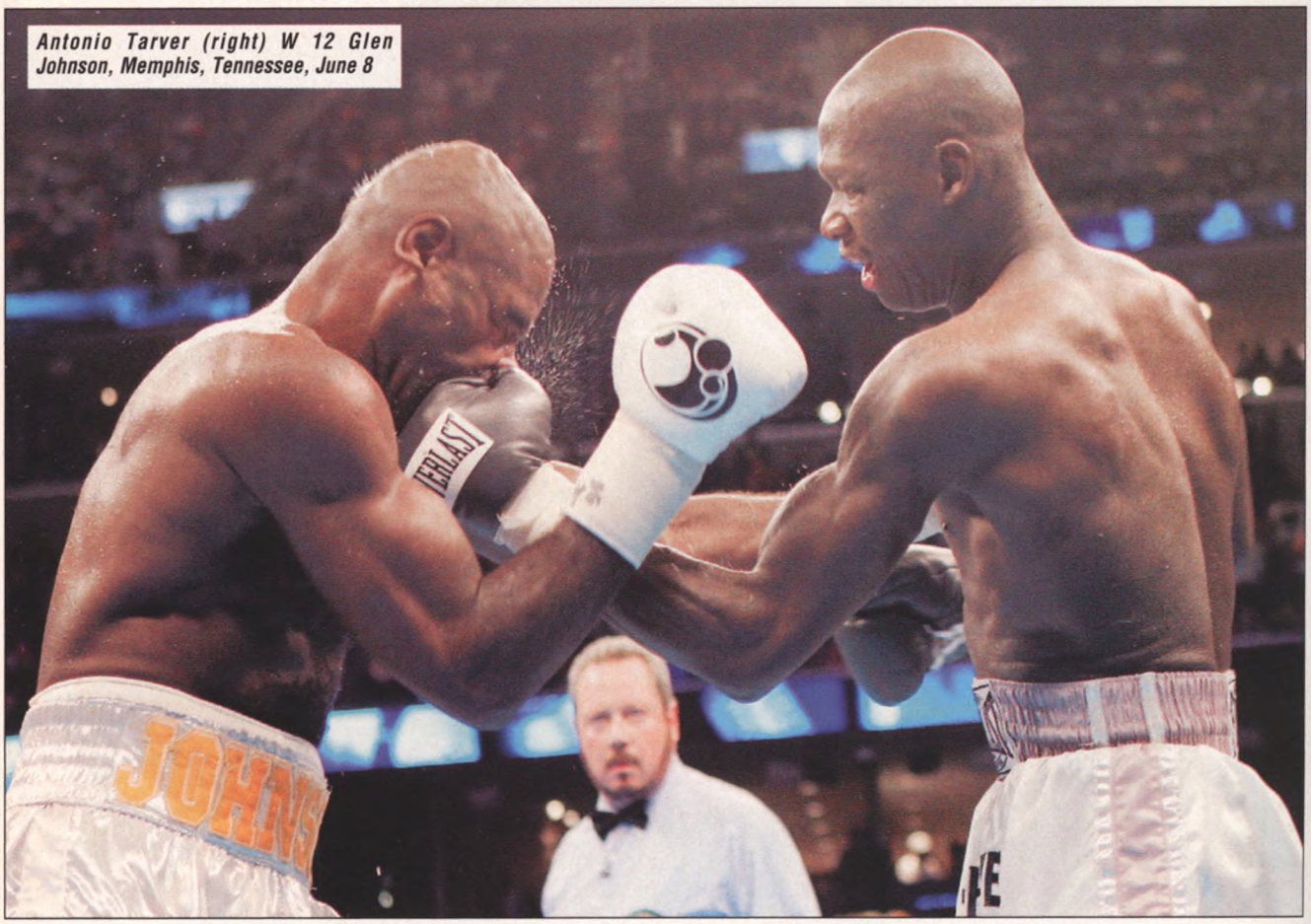
PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Shane Mosley (right) W 10 Jose Luis Cruz, Las Vegas, Nevada, September 17

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Riddick Bowe (left) W 10 Billy Zumbrun, Temecula, California, April 7

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS



Antonio Tarver (right) W 12 Glen Johnson, Memphis, Tennessee, June 8

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS/HBO

Brian Minto (right) KO 7 Vinny Maddalone, Tampa, Florida, October 1

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Lamon Brewster (left) KO 9 Luan Krasniqi, Hamburg, Germany, September 25

PHOTO BY ROLAND MAGUNIA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY AL BELLO GETTY IMAGES

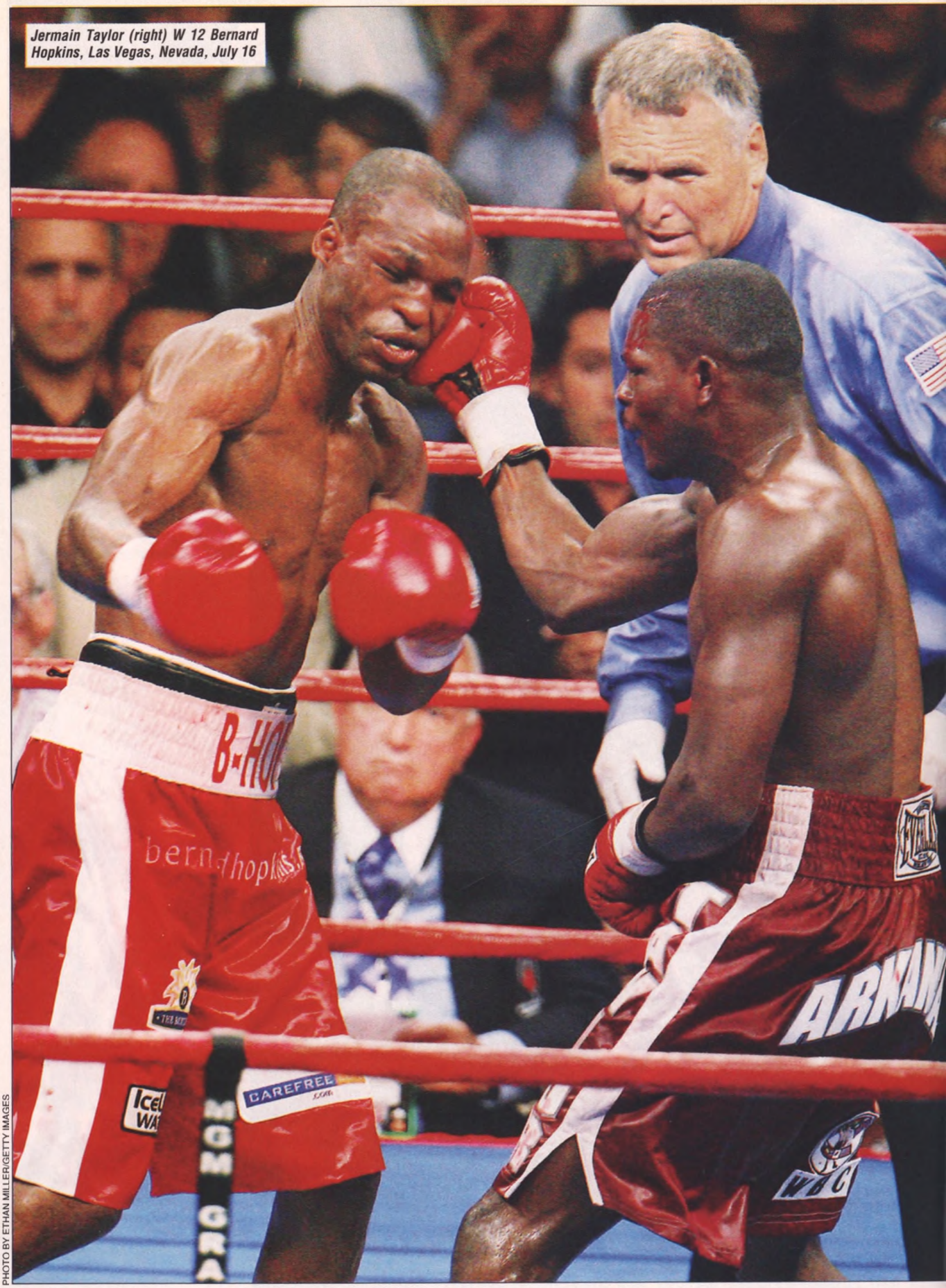
Floyd Mayweather (right) KO 6 Arturo Gatti, Atlantic City, New Jersey, June 25

Oscar Larios (left) KO 10 Wayne McCullough, Las Vegas, Nevada, July 16

Vernon Forrest (right) KO 2 Sergio Rios, Las Vegas, Nevada, July 17

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO



Jermain Taylor (right) W 12 Bernard Hopkins, Las Vegas, Nevada, July 16

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Luis Collazo (right) KO 8 Miguel Angel Gonzalez, Chicago, Illinois, August 13

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Andre Berto (right) W 4 Joseph Benjamin, Uncasville, Connecticut, January 21

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Markus Beyer (right) W 12 Omar Sheika, Berlin, Germany, September 9

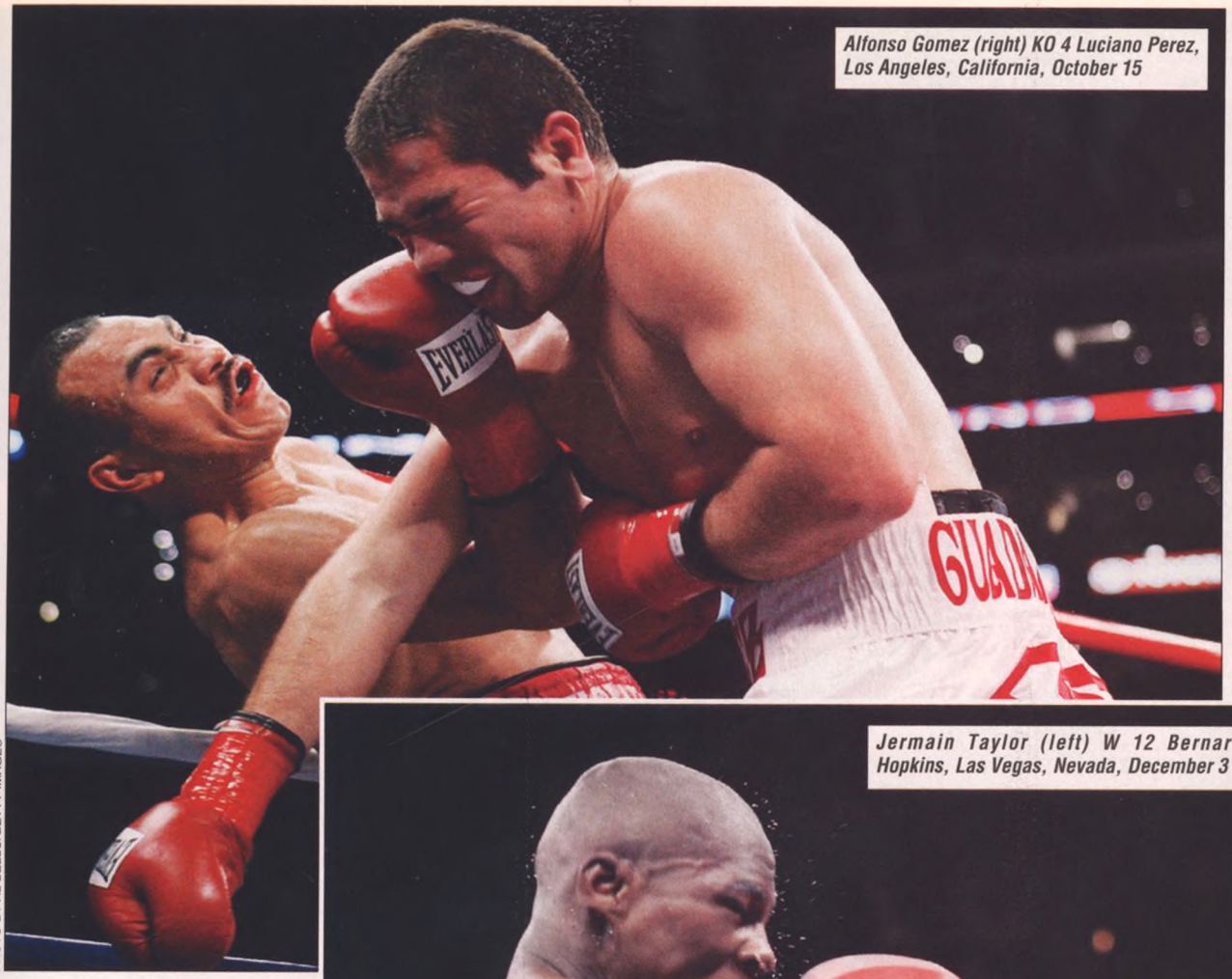
PHOTO BY MARCUS BRANDT/GETTY IMAGES

Erik Morales (left) W 12 Manny Pacquiao, Las Vegas, Nevada, March 19

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

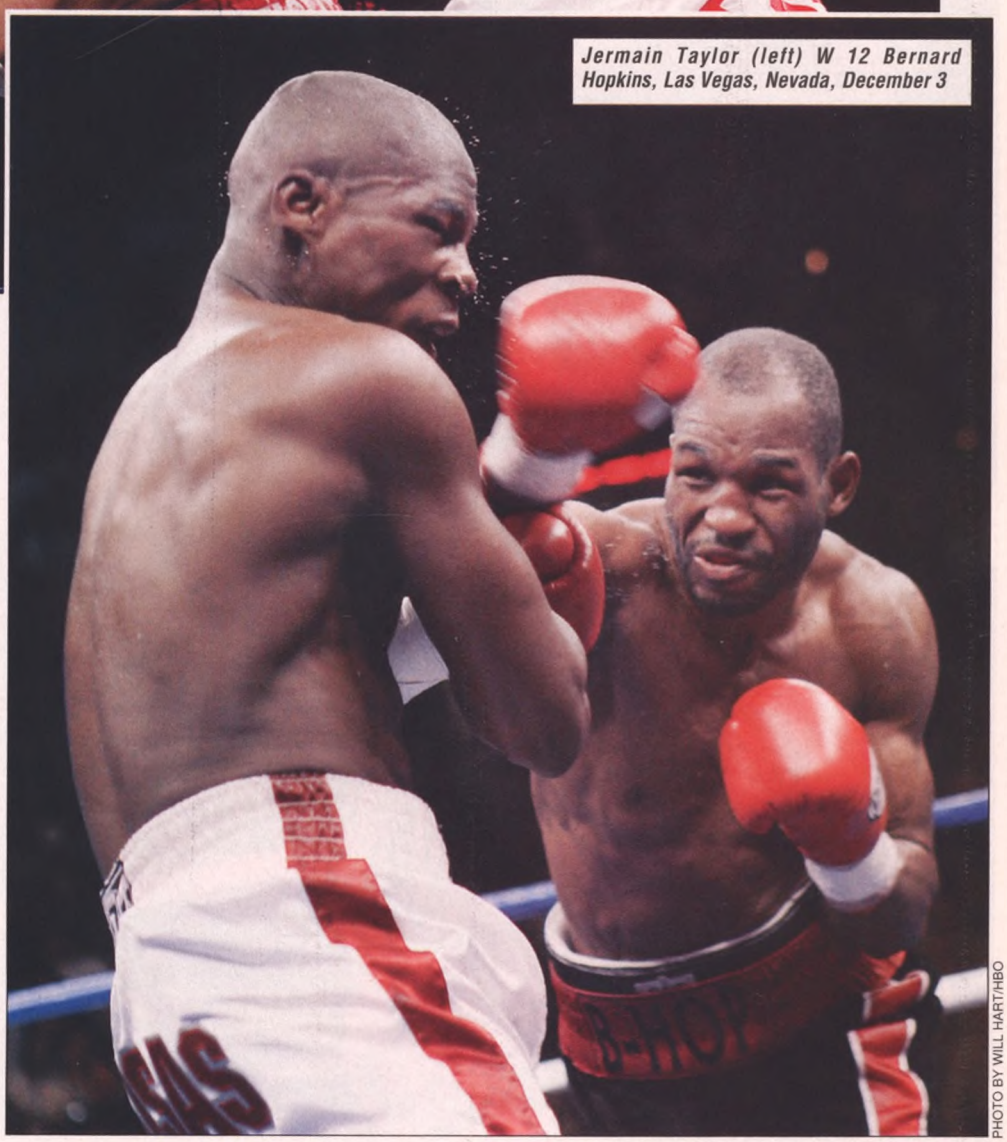
Mahyar Monshipour (left) KO 6 Shigeru Nakazato, Marseille, France, April 29

PHOTO BY BORIS HORVAT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Alfonso Gomez (right) KO 4 Luciano Perez, Los Angeles, California, October 15

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES



Jermain Taylor (left) W 12 Bernard Hopkins, Las Vegas, Nevada, December 3

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Wladimir Klitschko (right) W 12 Samuel Peter, Atlantic City, New Jersey, September 24

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

POINT OF NO RETURN

In many bouts there is a juncture when the fight is decided and there's nothing the loser can do about it. Often, that moment comes with one of the contestants on the canvas either unconscious or struggling to clear the cobwebs. Others are fully awake, but have given all they have and simply can't muster the willpower or energy to carry on. Occasionally, the realization that it's all over doesn't fully hit home until the boxer is back on his stool, surrounded by concerned cornermen. But regardless of the particulars, the way a beaten boxer handles defeat can be just as important as the way he handles victory—maybe even more so.

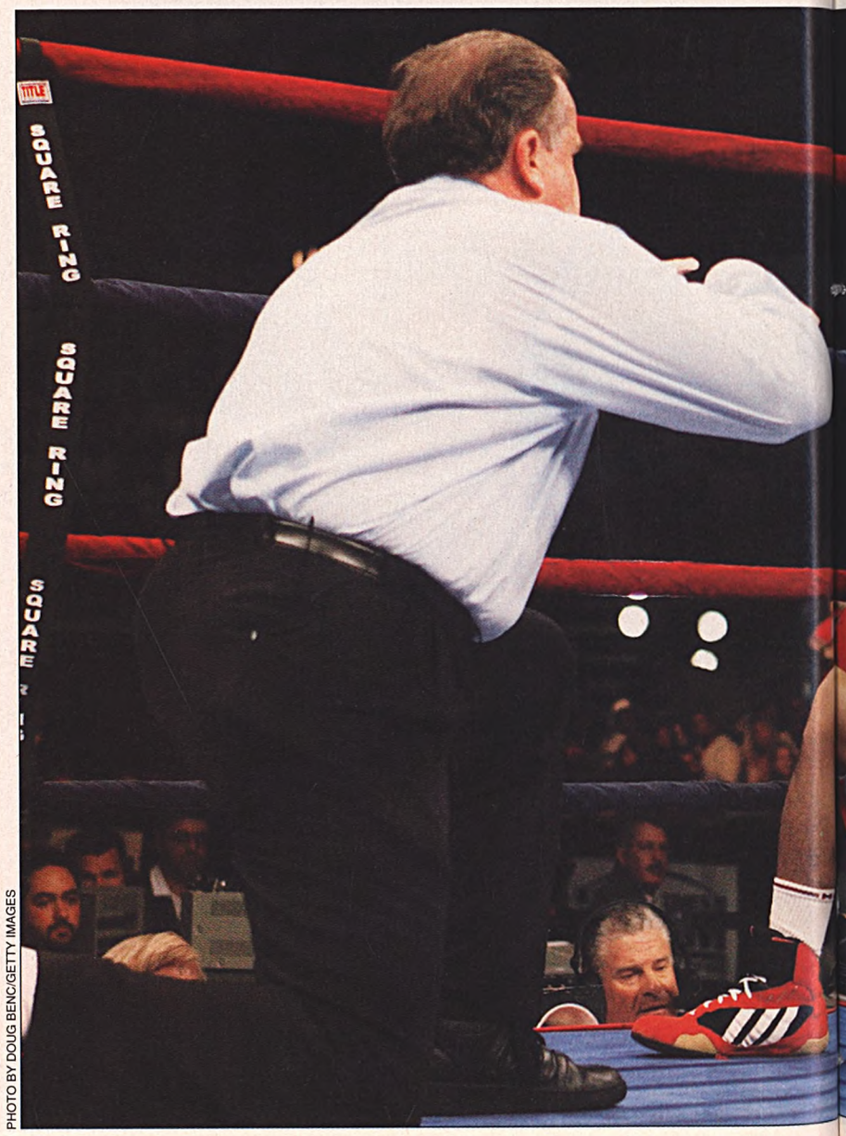
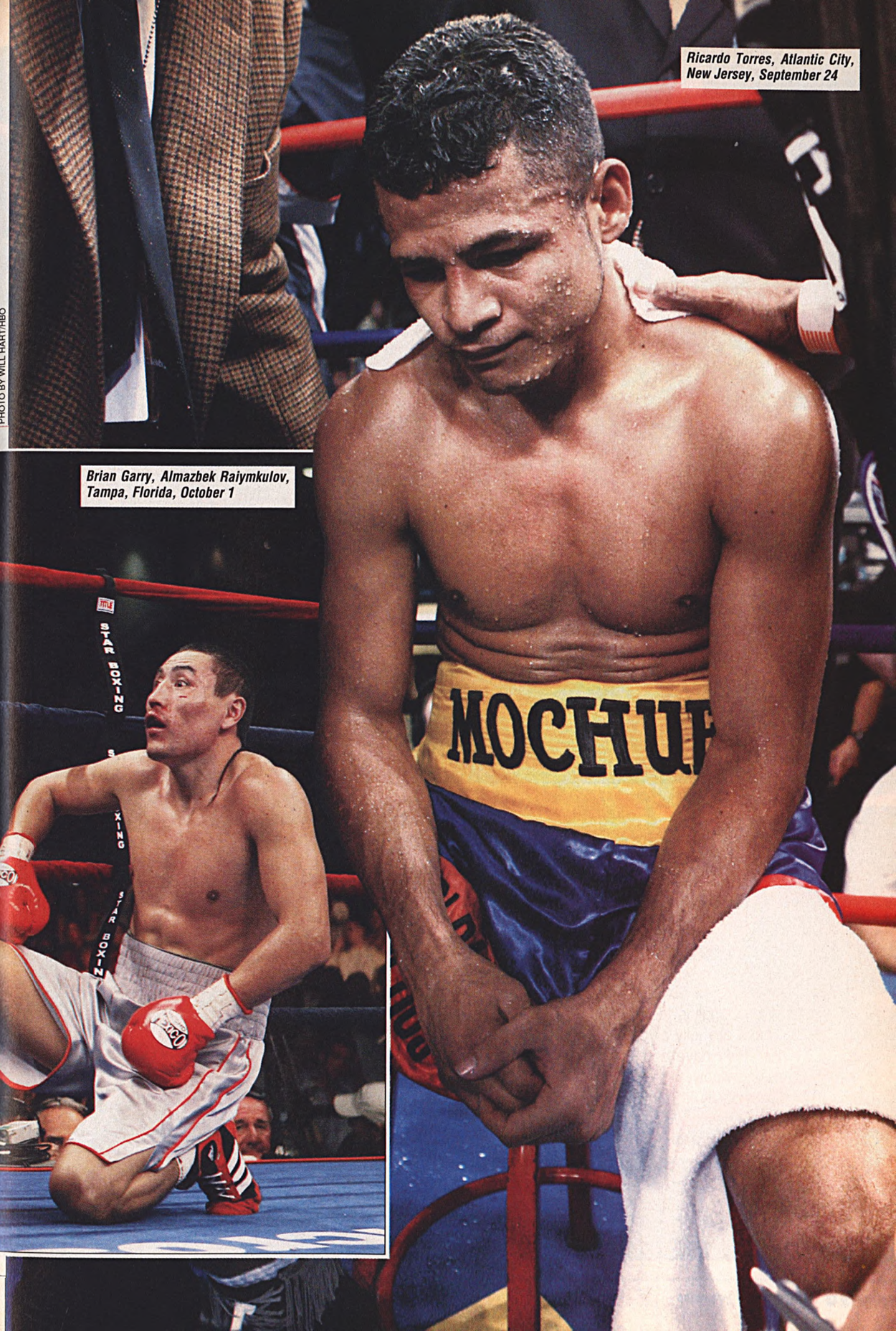


PHOTO BY DOUG BENC/GETTY IMAGES

Brian Garry, Almazbek Raiymkulov, Tampa, Florida, October 1



Ricardo Torres, Atlantic City, New Jersey, September 24

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Kevin McBride KO 6 Mike Tyson, Washington, DC, June 11

PHOTO BY PAUL J. RICHARDSON/GETTY IMAGES

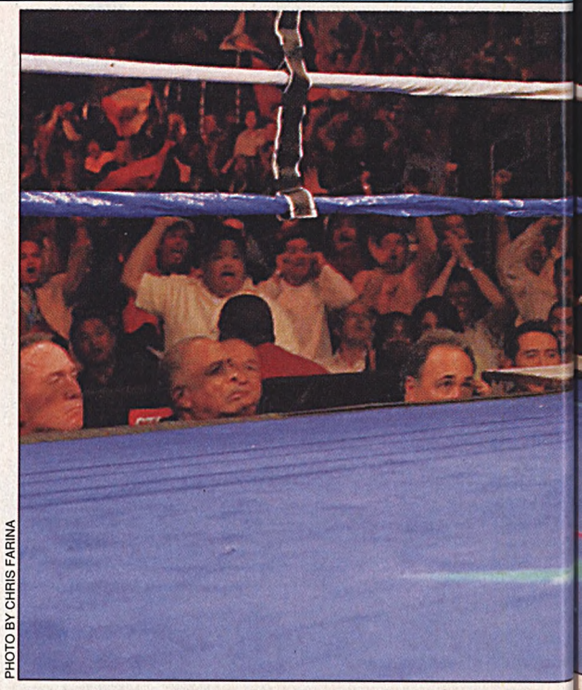
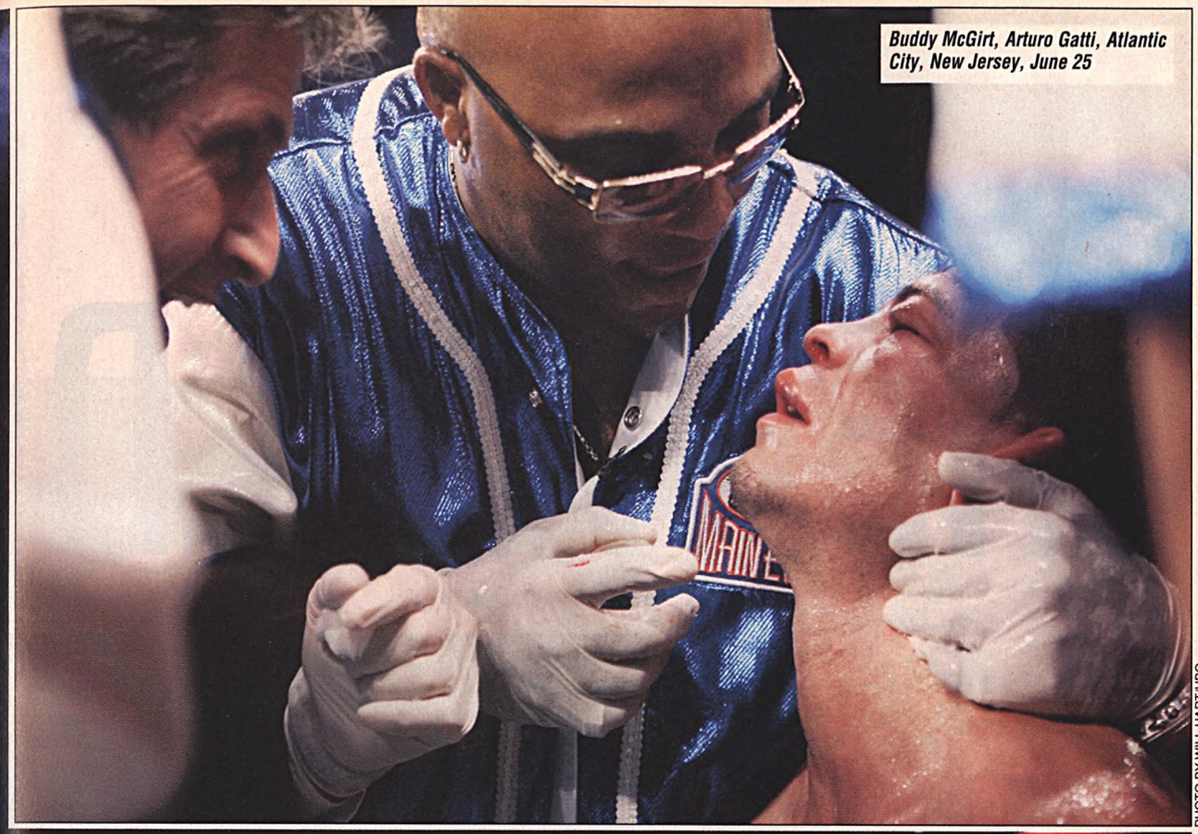


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Brian Viloria KO 1 Eric Ortiz, Los Angeles, California, September 10

Arturo Gatti KO 5 Jesse James Leija, Atlantic City, New Jersey, January 29

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES



Buddy McGirt, Arturo Gatti, Atlantic City, New Jersey, June 25

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

TOP OF THE WORLD

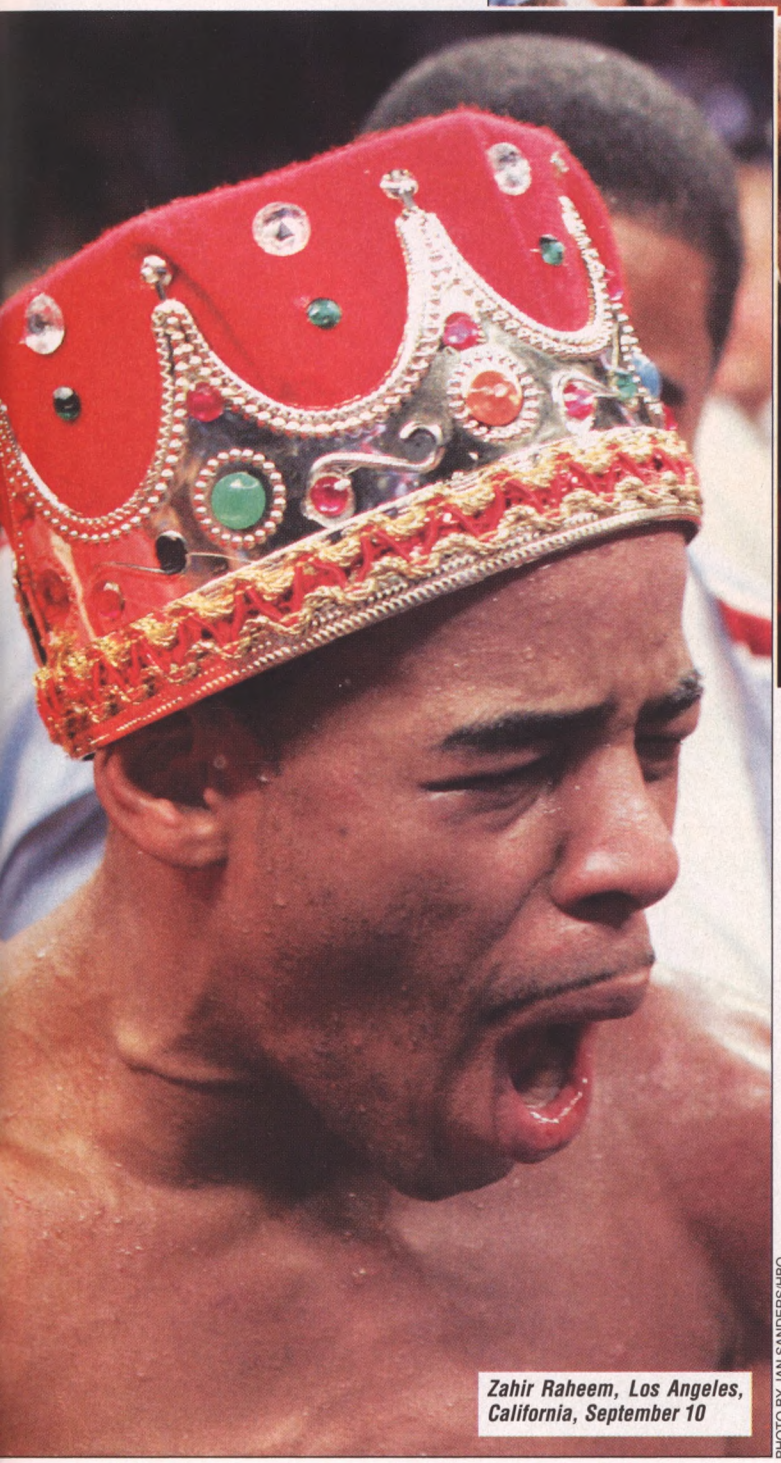
Jose Luis Castillo, Las Vegas, Nevada, October 8

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

While a small minority stay calm and collected when the ring announcer proclaims them triumphant, very few fighters follow the old Joe Louis Code when it comes to celebrating victory. Instead of the poker face and a perfunctory raising of the arm, today's fighters let it all hang out in a blatant display of naked emotion. For many this means a joyous celebration, while for others it is blessed relief—and sometimes surprise. But regardless of how they feel, you can tell a lot about fighters, and the fights they've just engaged in, by watching the way they react when the moment they've been waiting for finally arrives.

Diego Corrales, Las Vegas, Nevada, May 7

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

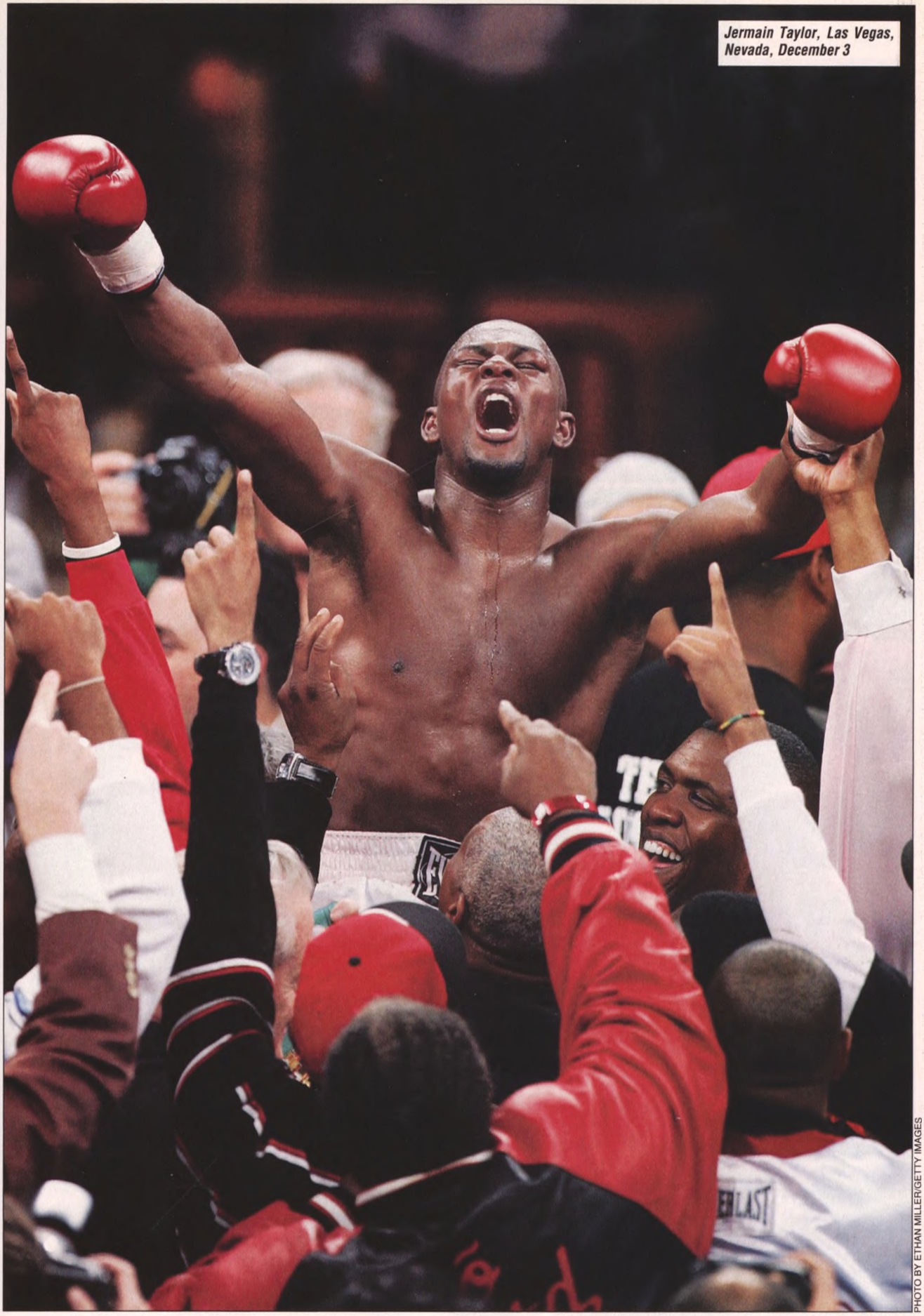


Zahir Raheem, Los Angeles, California, September 10

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS/HBO

Miguel Cotto, Bayamon, Puerto Rico, February 29

PHOTO TOM CASINO/HBO

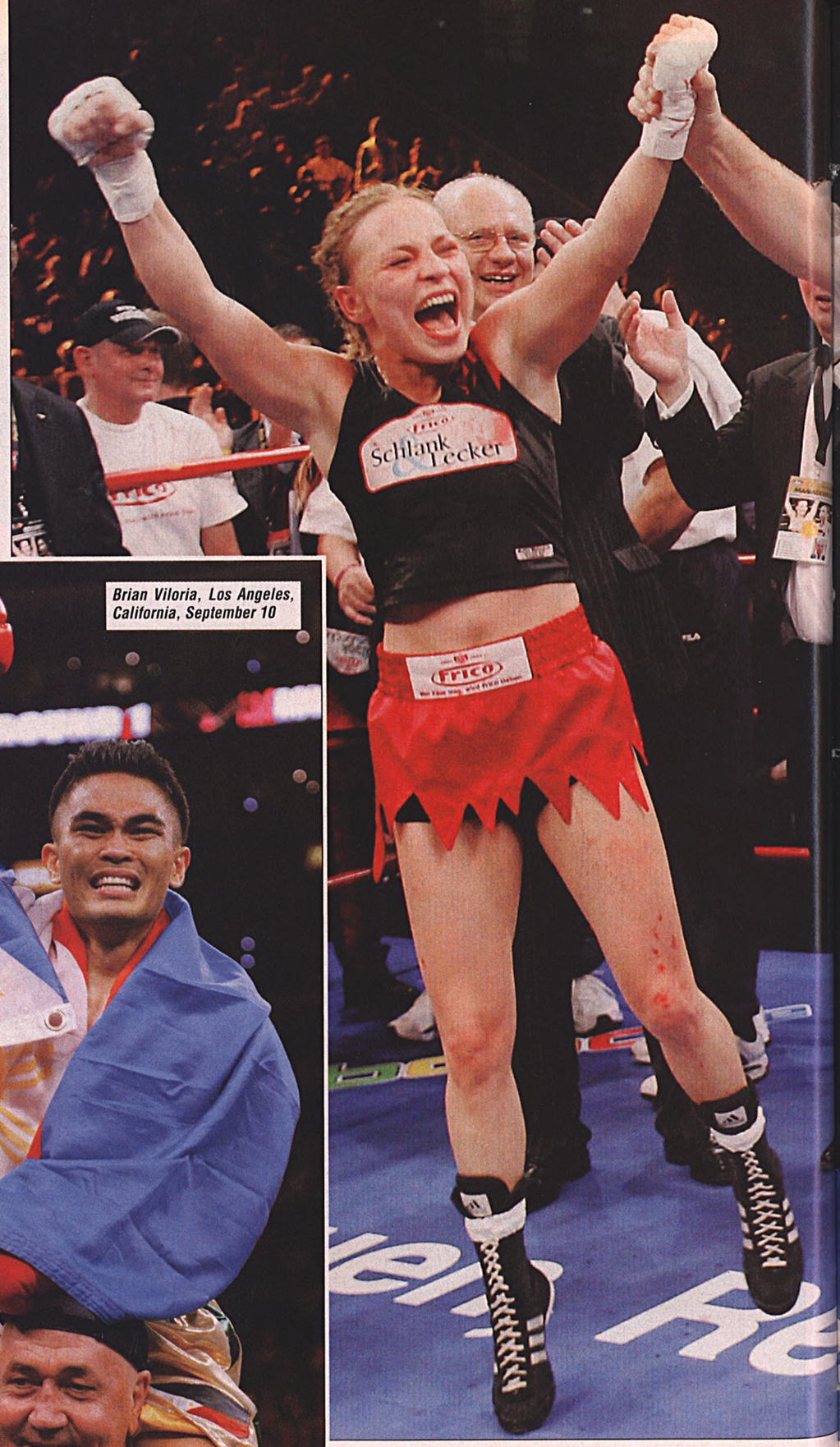


Jermain Taylor, Las Vegas, Nevada, December 3

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Brian Viloria, Los Angeles, California, September 10

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA



Regina Halmich W 10 Elena Reid, Magdeburg, Germany, December 3

PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN FISHER/GETTY IMAGES

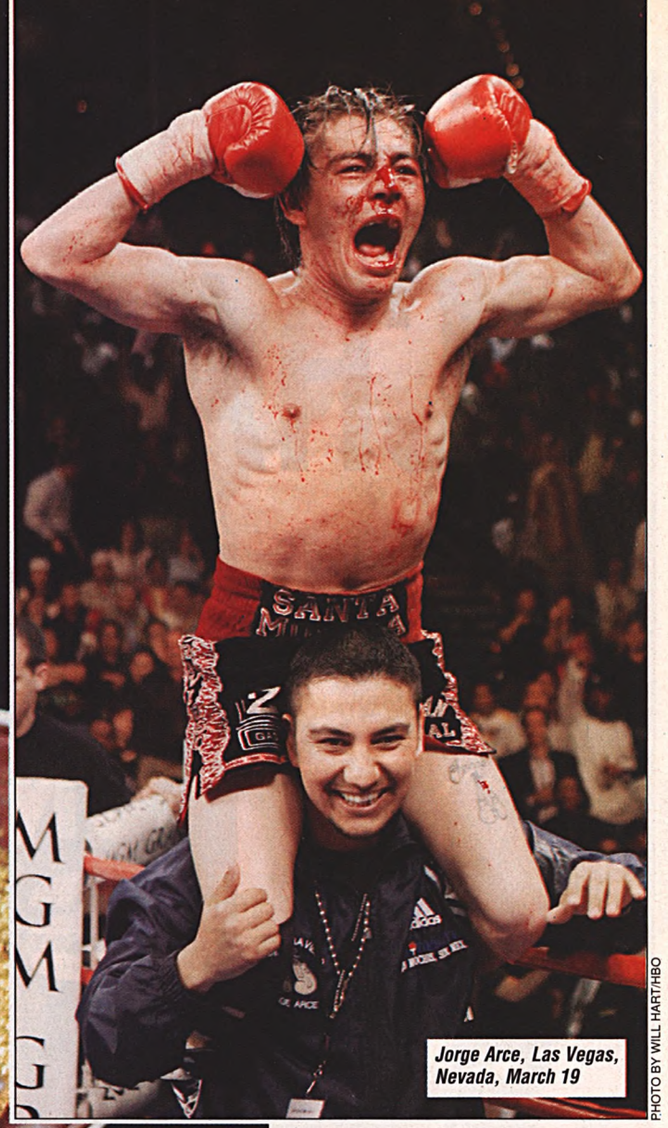
Sergio Mora, Las Vegas, Nevada, May 24

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Nicolay Valuev, Berlin, Germany, December 17

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Zab Judah, St. Louis, Missouri, February 5



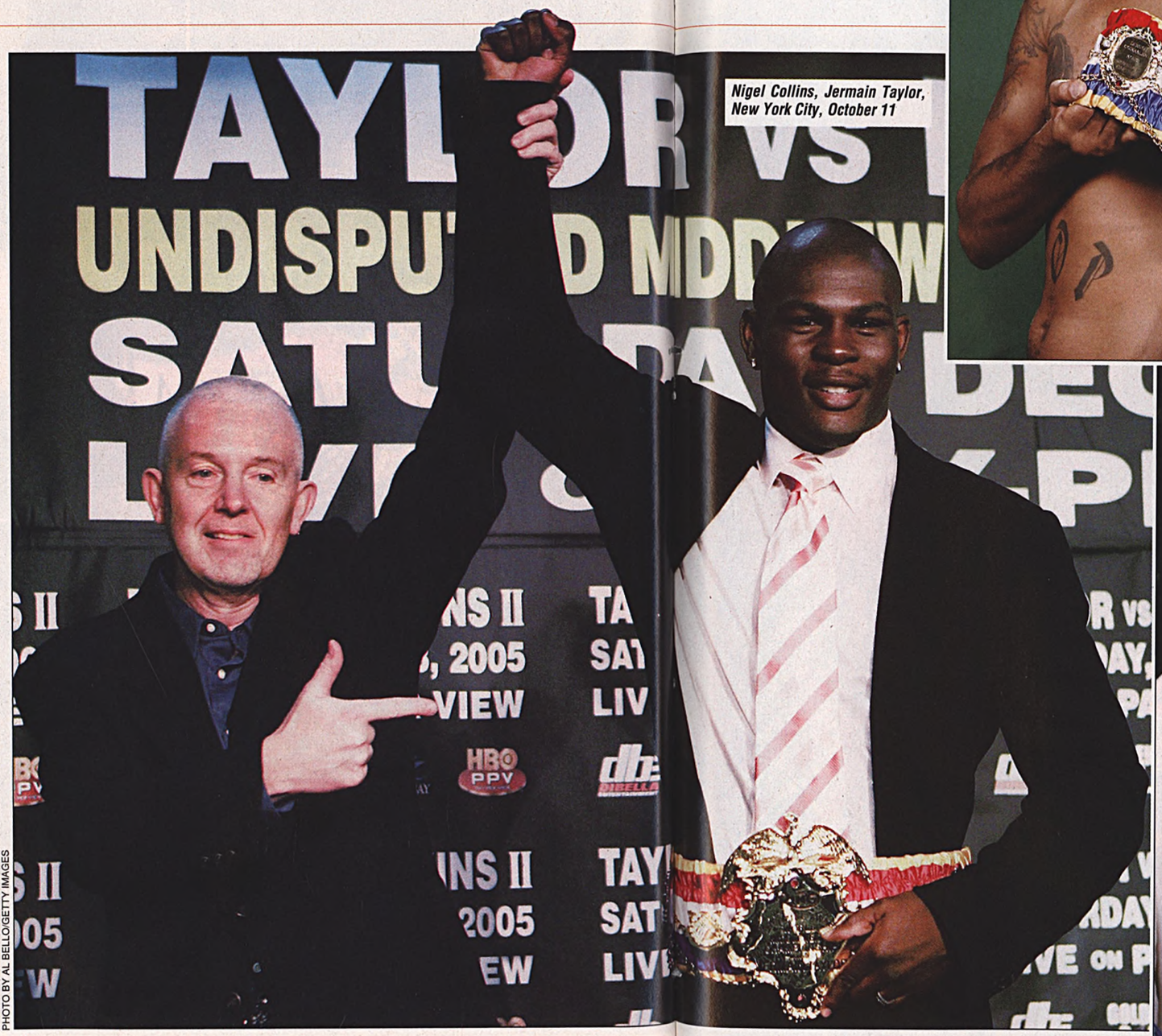
Jorge Arce, Las Vegas, Nevada, March 19

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

PHOTO BY ELSA/GETTY IMAGES

THE MARK OF A CHAMPION

Every belt means something to the boxers who wear them. After all, they trained diligently and fought hard to win them. But only one belt signifies that the man who owns it is the legitimate world champion, and that is THE RING belt. As this issue went to press, only seven active fighters were current RING champions, making them members of the most exclusive club in the world of sports.

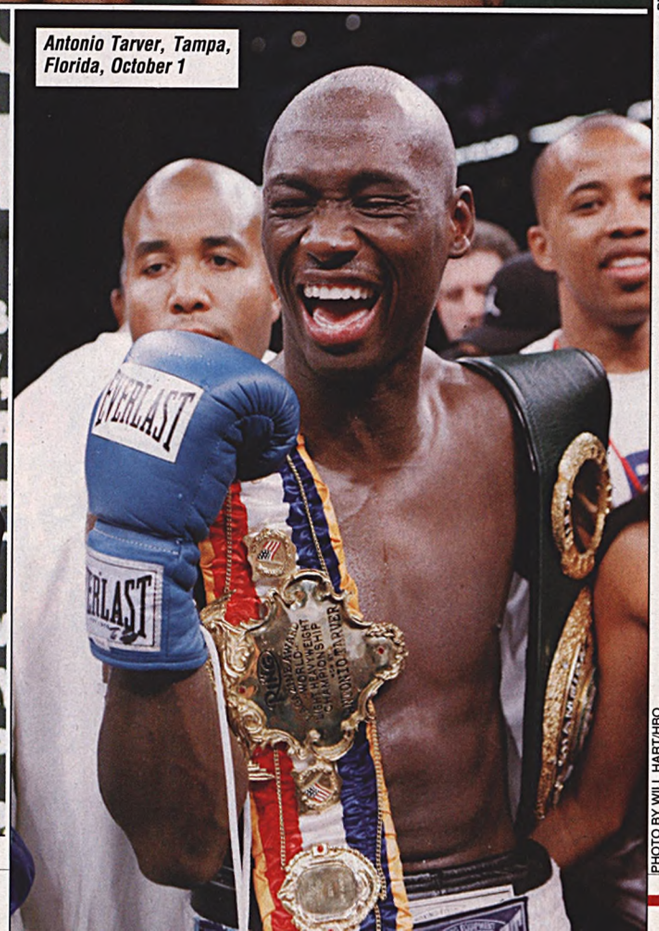


Nigel Collins, Jermain Taylor, New York City, October 11

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Diego Corrales, Jose Luis Castillo, Las Vegas, Nevada

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA



Antonio Tarver, Tampa, Florida, October 1

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

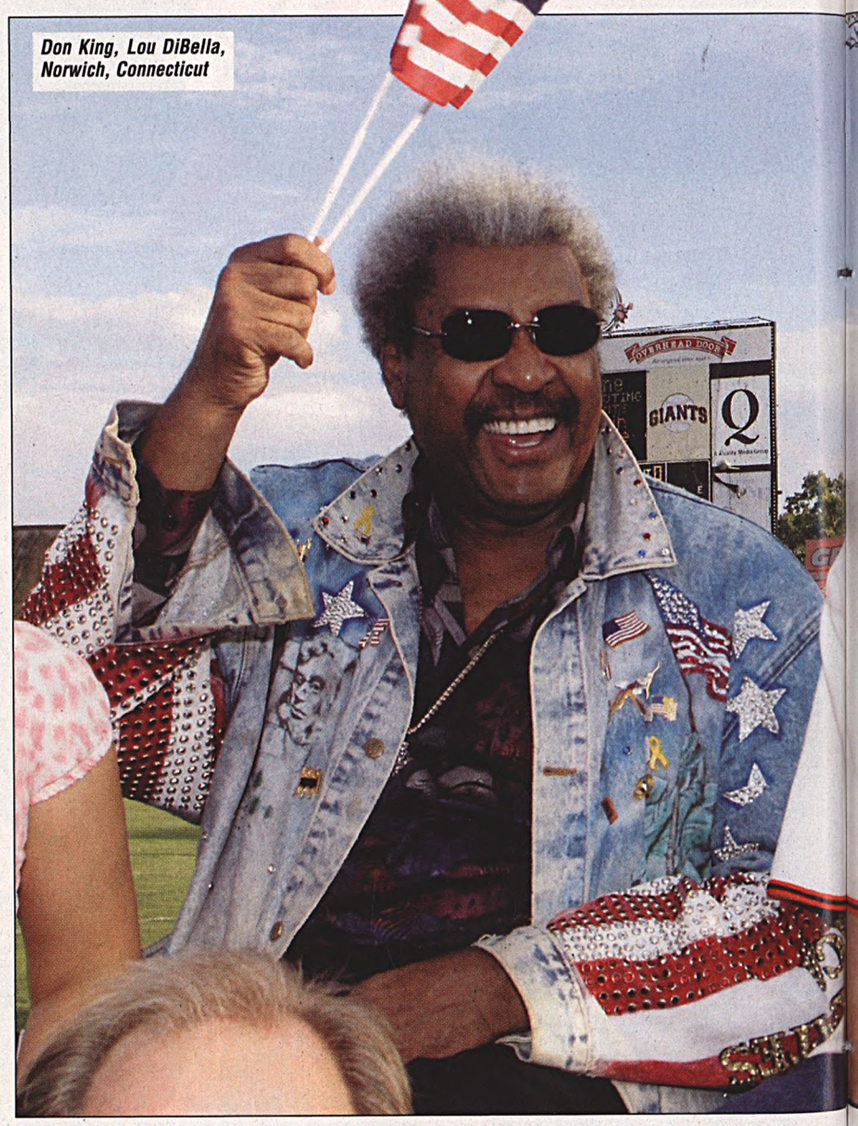
Jean-Marc Mormeck, New York City

Bernard Hopkins, Oscar De La Hoya, Los Angeles, California, February 19

PHOTO BY WILL HART HBO

BEYOND THE RING

While most of the action takes place in the squared circle, fighters live interesting lives outside of the ring. There is the gym, of course, a boxer's home away from home. But there are also public functions, charity events, photo sessions, and hanging with other celebrities. Most of these are happy occasions, but fighters also have to deal with mortality, and one of the most poignant images included in this section portrays a fighter on his way to his final reward.



Don King, Lou DiBella, Norwich, Connecticut

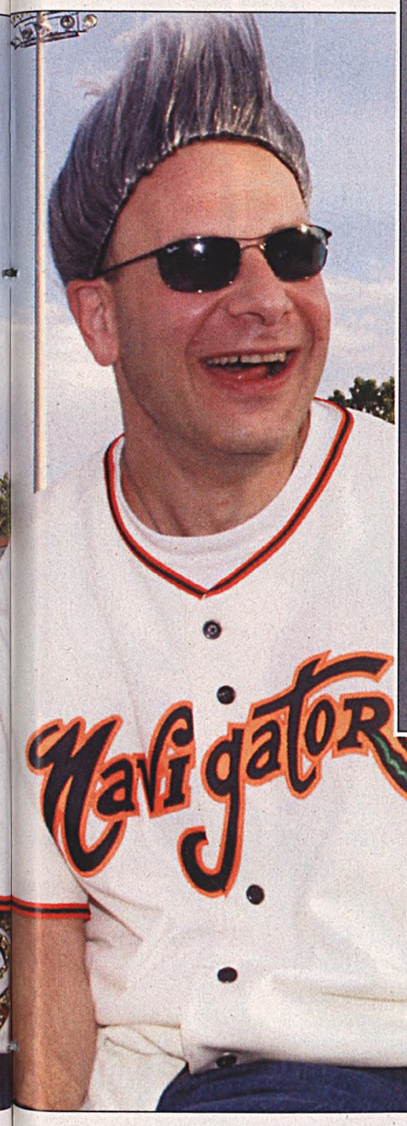


PHOTO BY NEIL ABRAMSON

Marco Antonio Barrera and son, Los Angeles, California

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Mike Tyson, Jeff Fenech, Phoenix, Arizona

PHOTO BY AL BELLO GETTY IMAGES

Amir Khan, projected onto Shell Building, London, England, December 31

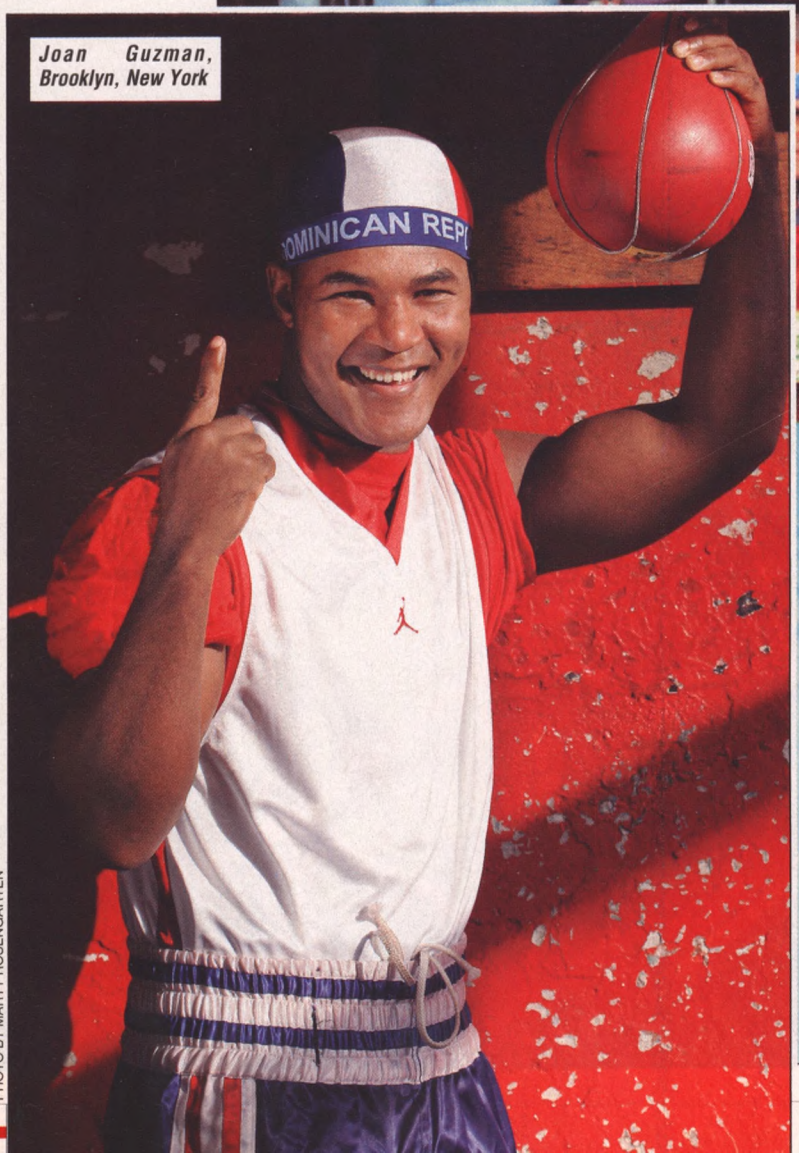
PHOTO BY BRUNO VINCENT GETTY IMAGES

Amir Golden Boy

Agapito and Evarista Sanchez, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, November 15

PHOTO BY WALTER ESTRADA AFP GETTY IMAGES

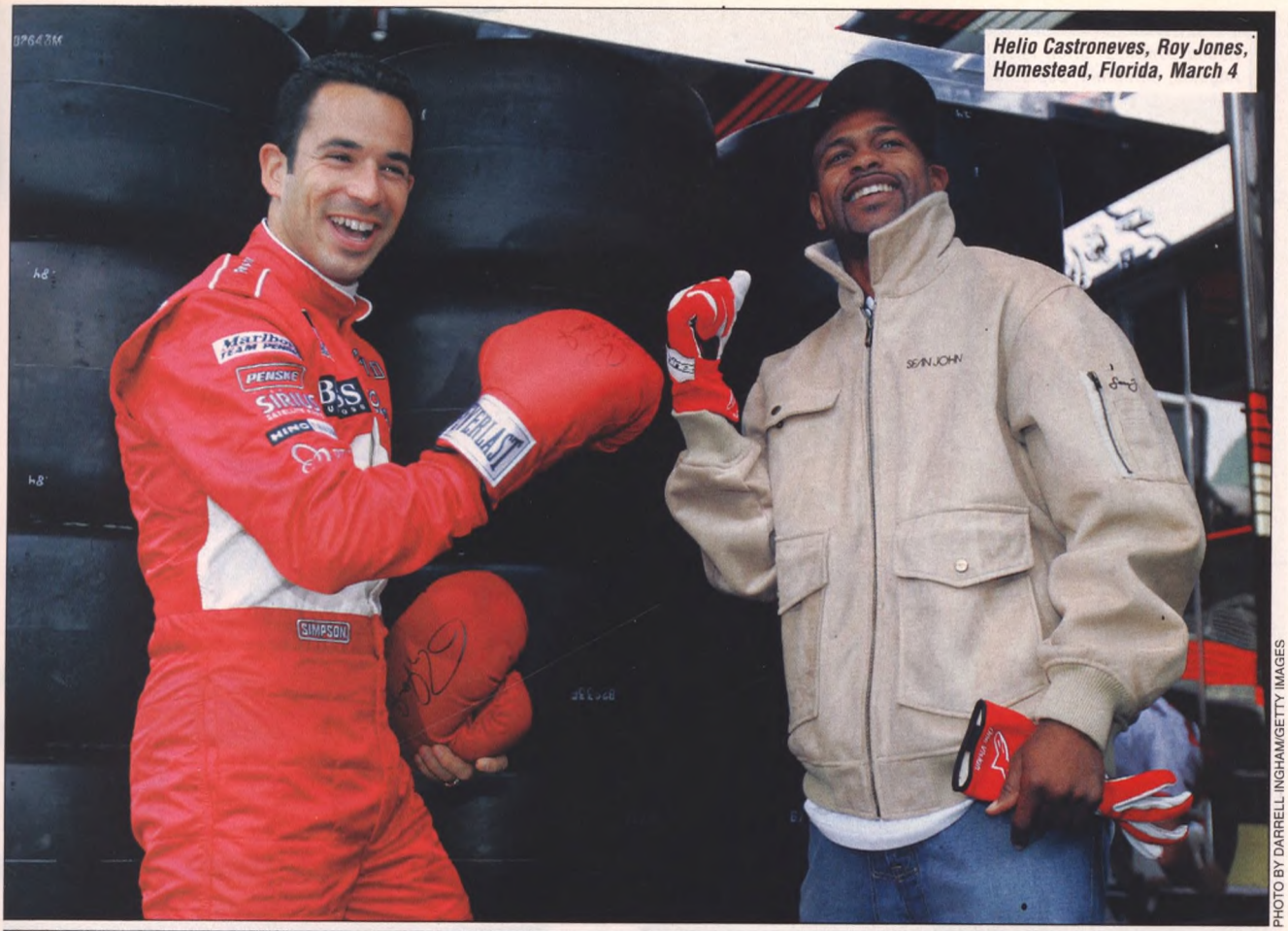
Round card girl, fan, Ledyard, Connecticut



Joan Guzman, Brooklyn, New York

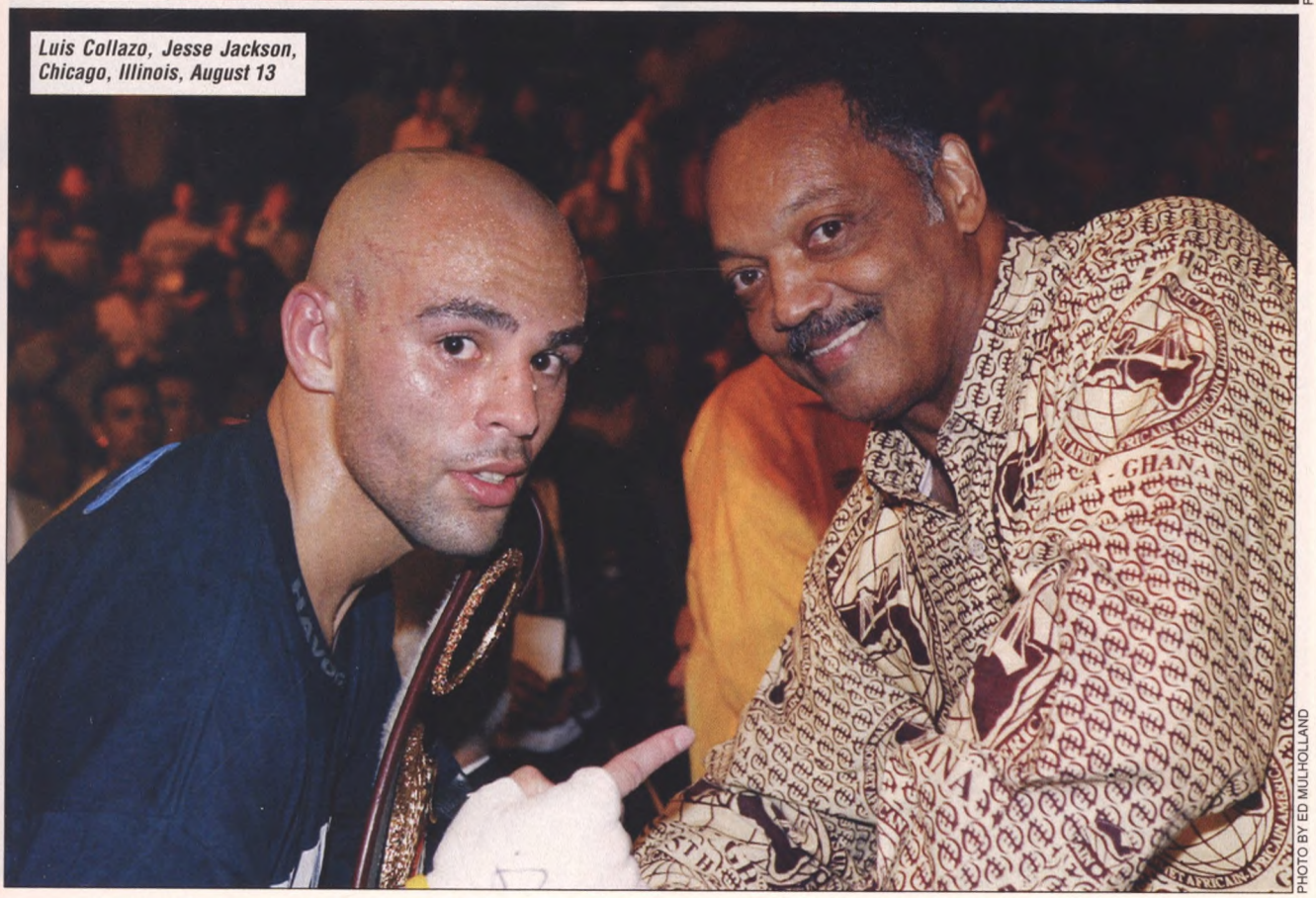
PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

PHOTO BT GREGG MARNANE



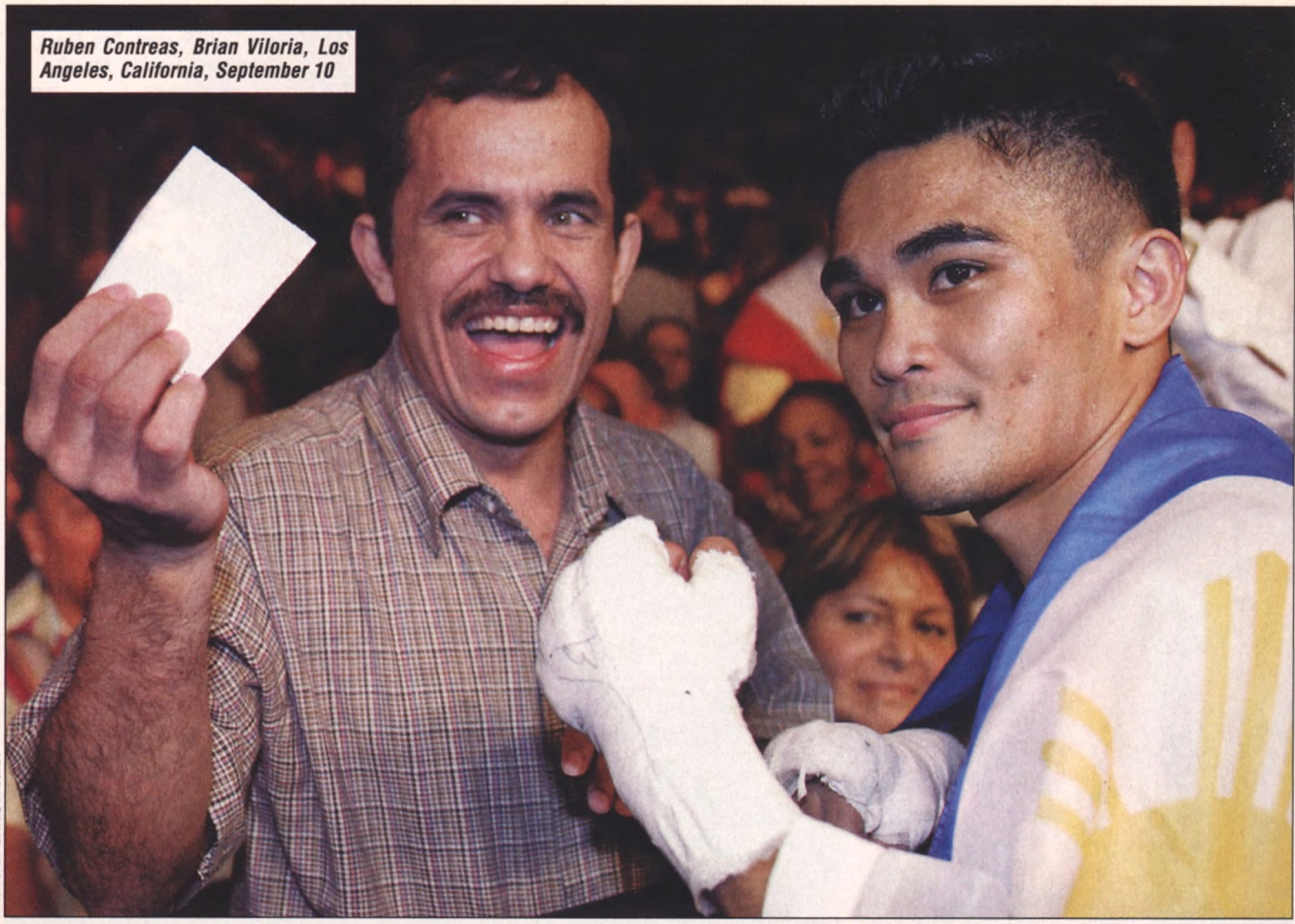
Helio Castroneves, Roy Jones, Homestead, Florida, March 4

PHOTO BY DARRELL INGHAM/GETTY IMAGES



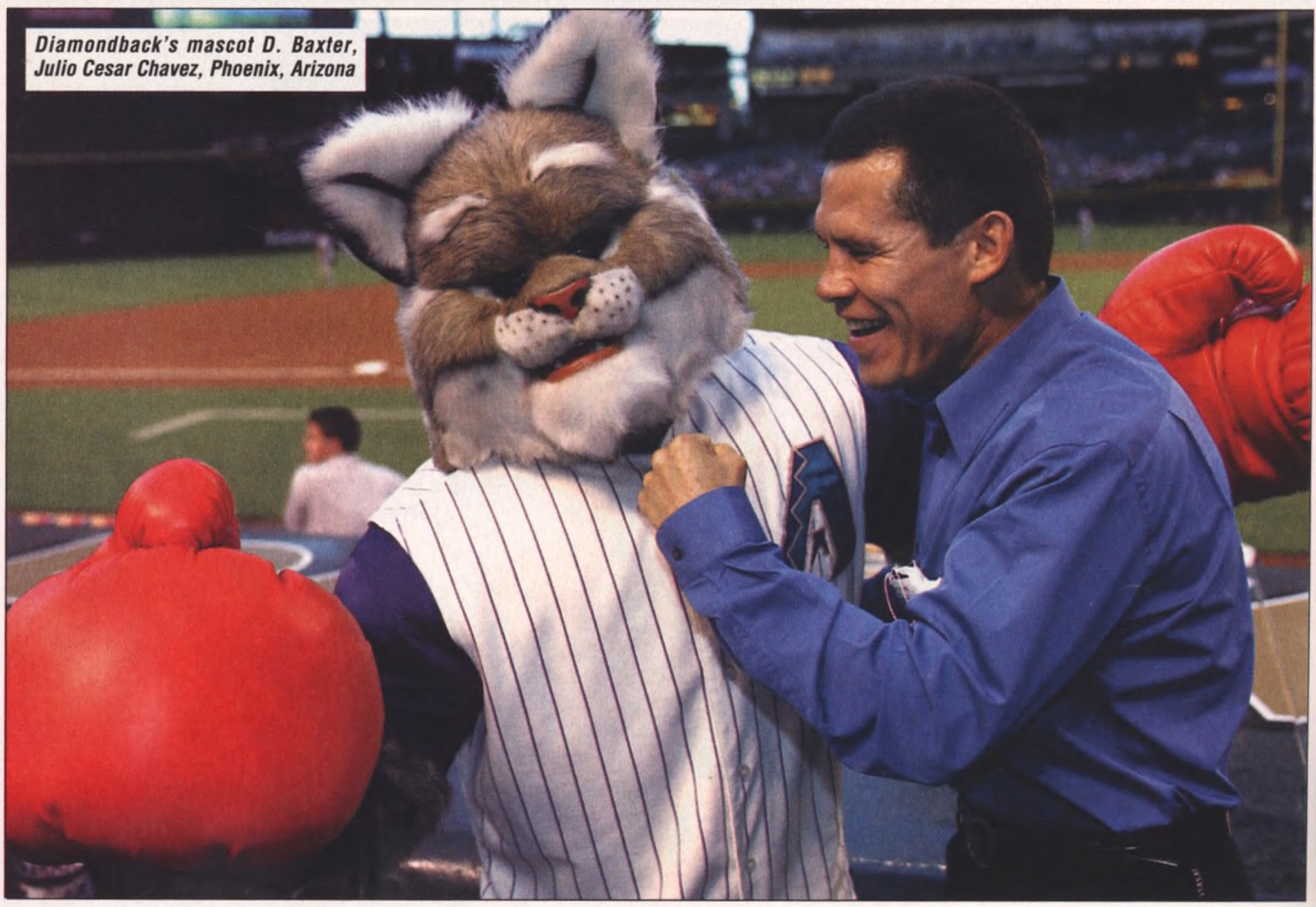
Luis Collazo, Jesse Jackson, Chicago, Illinois, August 13

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND



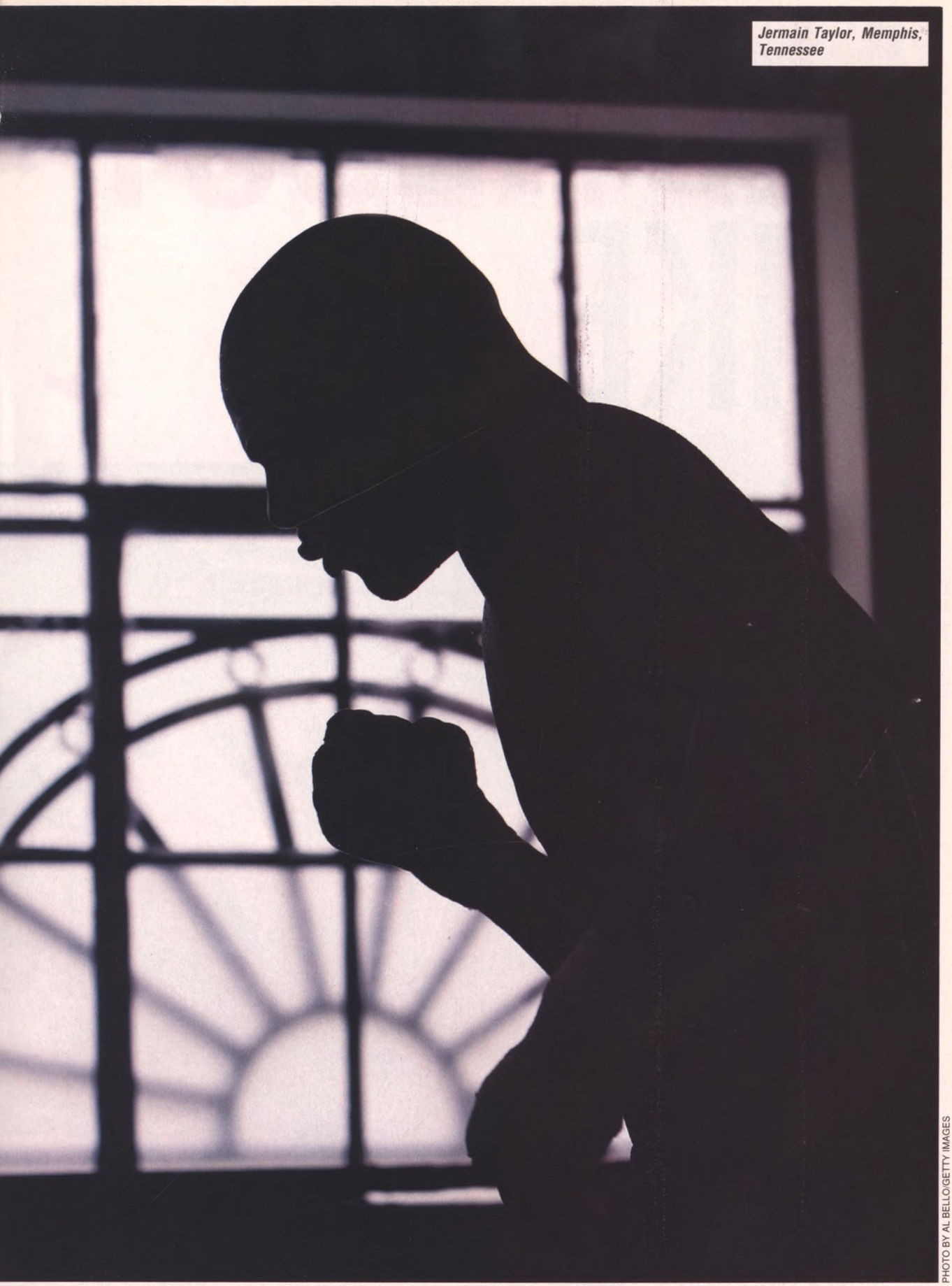
Ruben Contreas, Brian Viloria, Los Angeles, California, September 10

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA



Diamondback's mascot D. Baxter, Julio Cesar Chavez, Phoenix, Arizona

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA



Jermain Taylor, Memphis, Tennessee

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

ALL ABOUT MIKE

Moscow, Russia, September 14

PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

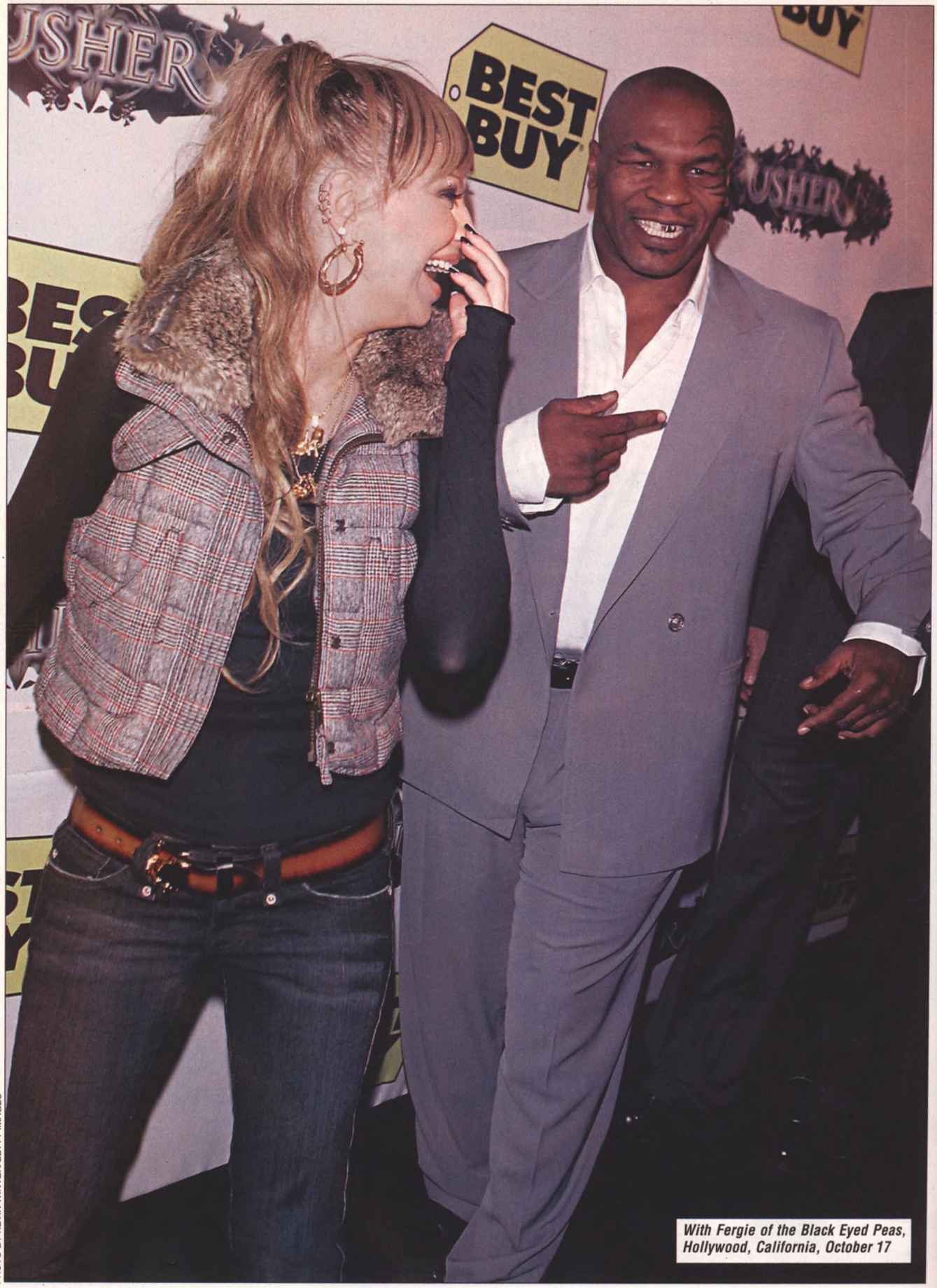
He's been over the hill for more than decade and will probably never fight again, but Mike Tyson remains the most famous boxer in the world nonetheless. This was made even more evident when Mike embarked on a world tour shortly after suffering a TKO loss to Kevin McBride in June. Before 2005 was over, Tyson had touched down in such diverse locales as Turkey, England, Brazil, Argentina, Russia, and Italy. There were some bumps along the way, such as the arrest in Brazil for roughing up a cameraman, but overall the old champ seemed to be having a ball in his new role as Guest of the World.

With an angel, Culver City, California, October 19

PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

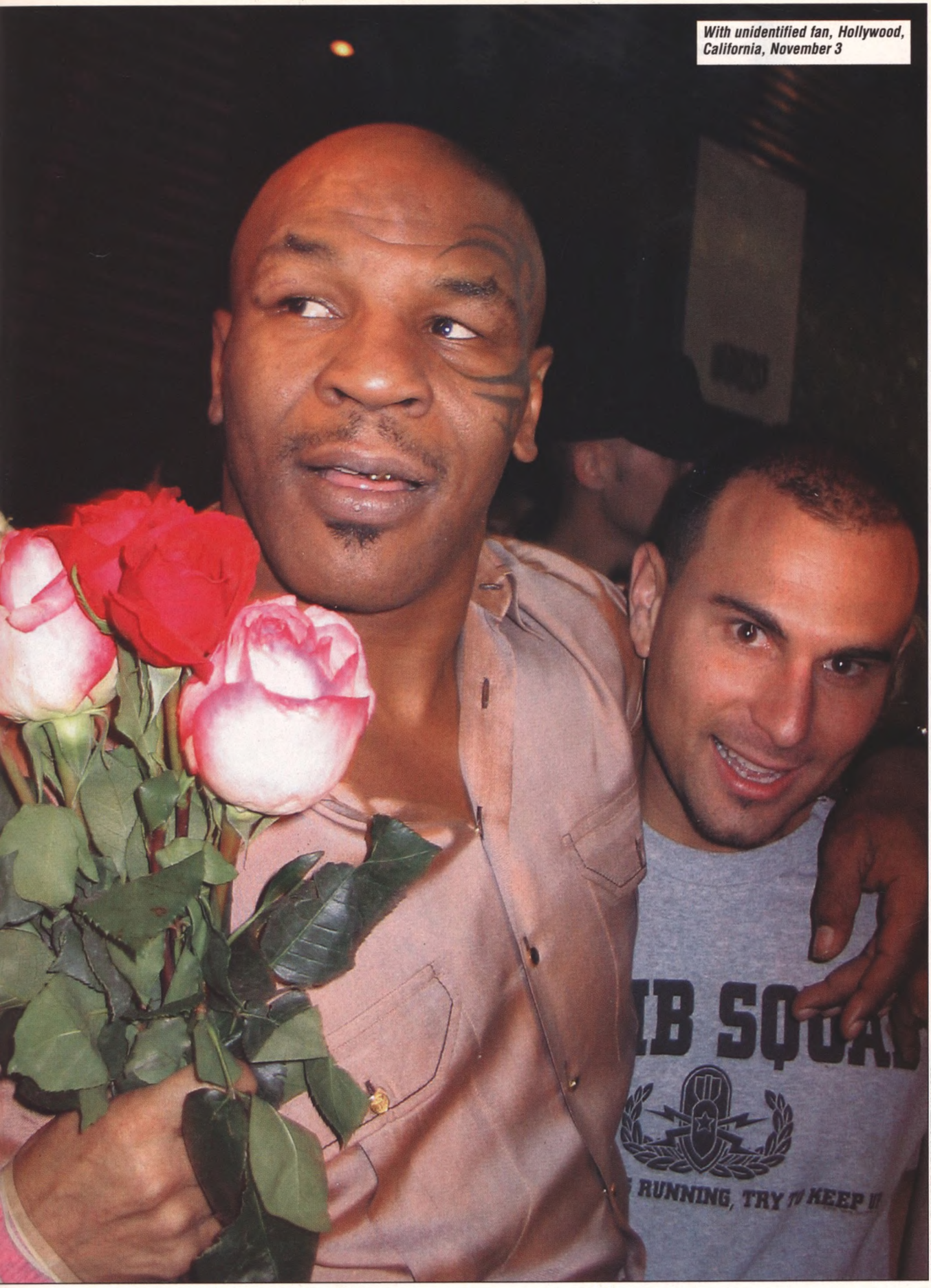
With Diego Maradona, Buenos Aries, Argentina

PHOTO COURTESY CANAL 13



With Fergie of the Black Eyed Peas, Hollywood, California, October 17

PHOTO BY KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES



With unidentified fan, Hollywood, California, November 3

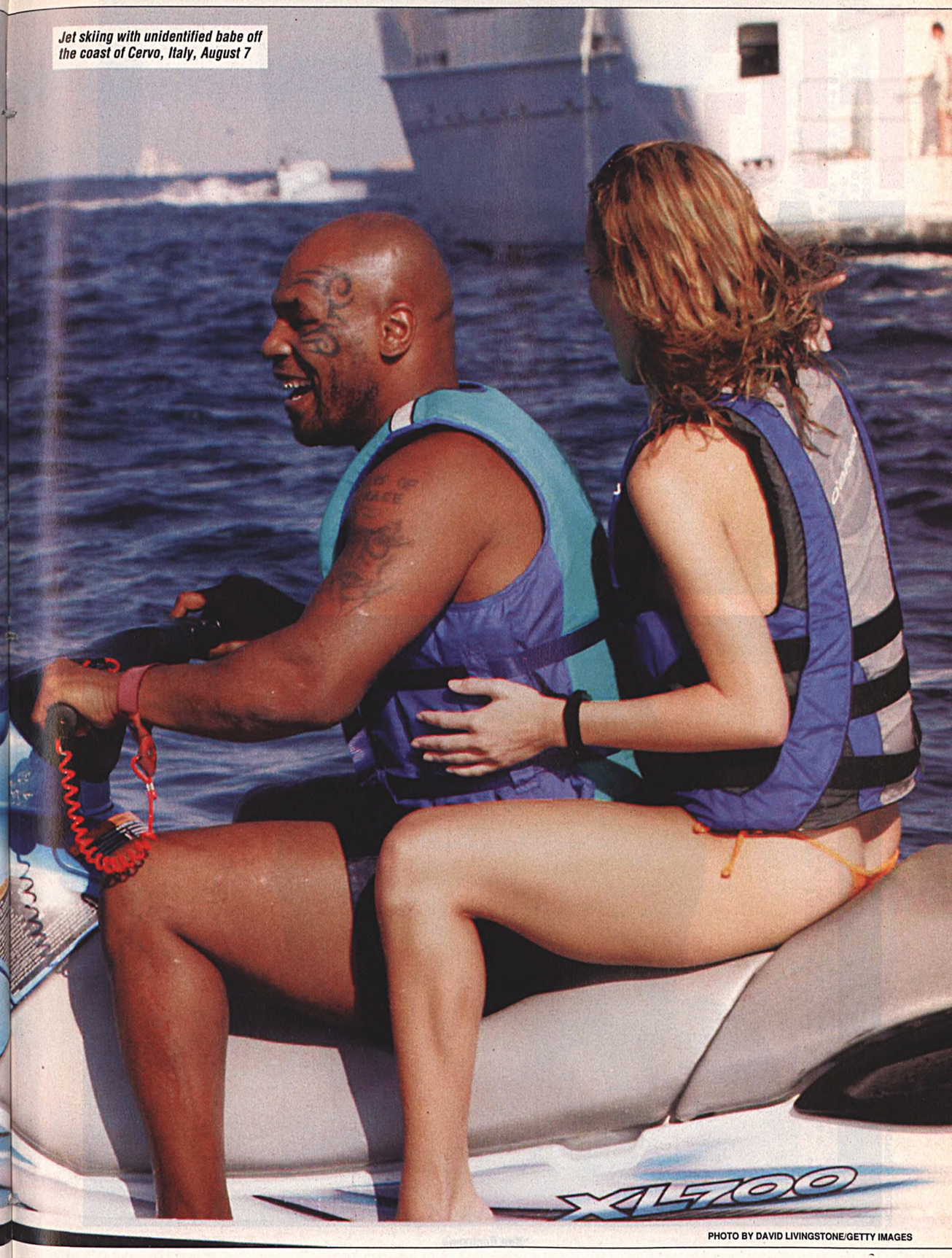
PHOTO BY ALEXANDER SIBAJA/GETTY IMAGES

With pigeon fancier Horace Potts and feathered friend, Walsall, England, November 18

PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

With Jeff Green, Los Angeles, California, October 31

PHOTO BY DAVID LIVINGSTONE/GETTY IMAGES



Jet skiing with unidentified babe off the coast of Cervo, Italy, August 7

PHOTO BY DAVID LIVINGSTONE/GETTY IMAGES

FIGHT FACES

Getty Images photographer Al Bello is a former college linebacker with the soul of an artist. The images that follow were taken during what Bello calls "a quest that took over my life for six months. I believe you can see the story of their lives in their eyes, and I wanted to capture that history in just one photograph." In order to give the images an old-school feel, Bello ditched his trusty digital camera and used a camera that took 4"x5" negatives. The results are something very special, the kind of photography that belongs on museum walls.

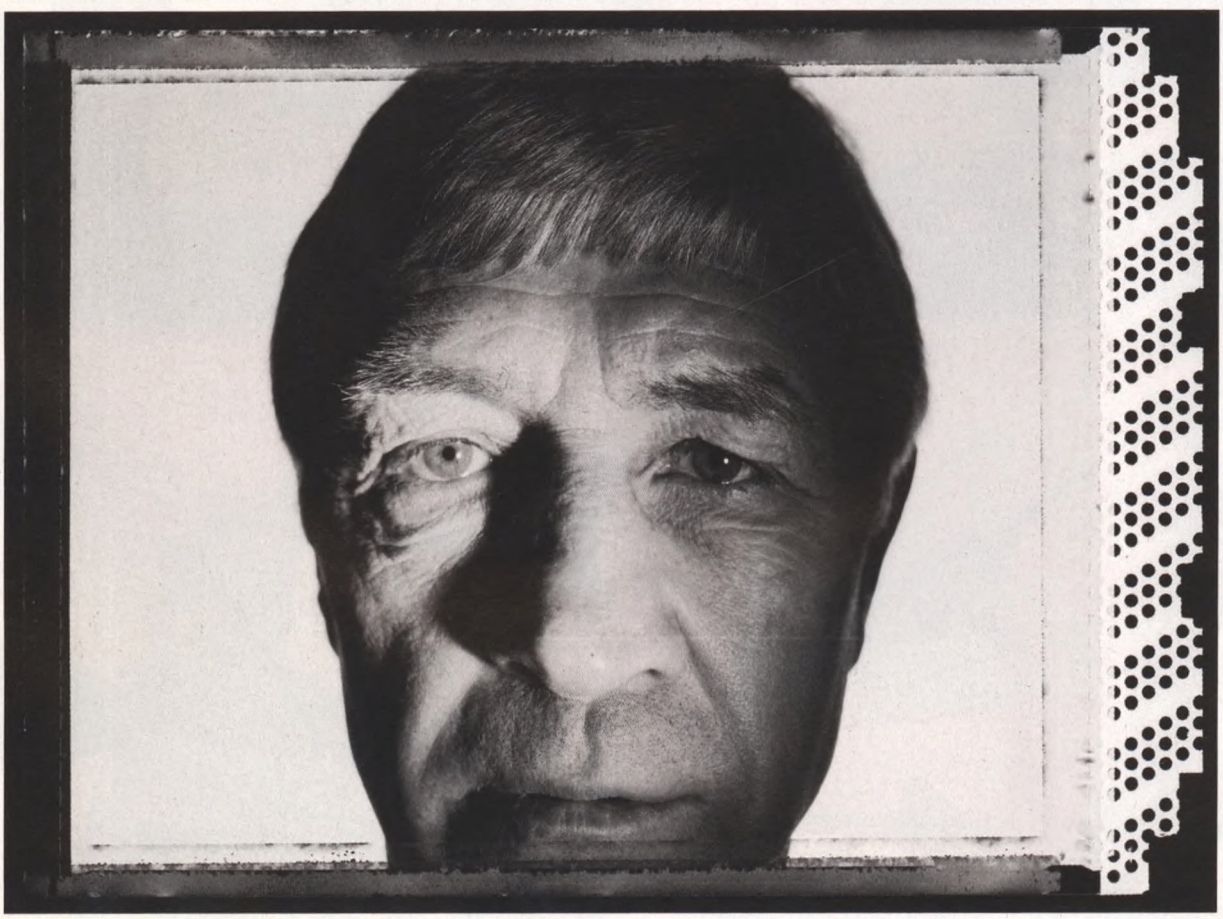


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Ken Buchanan

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Vinny Paz

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Carmen Basilio

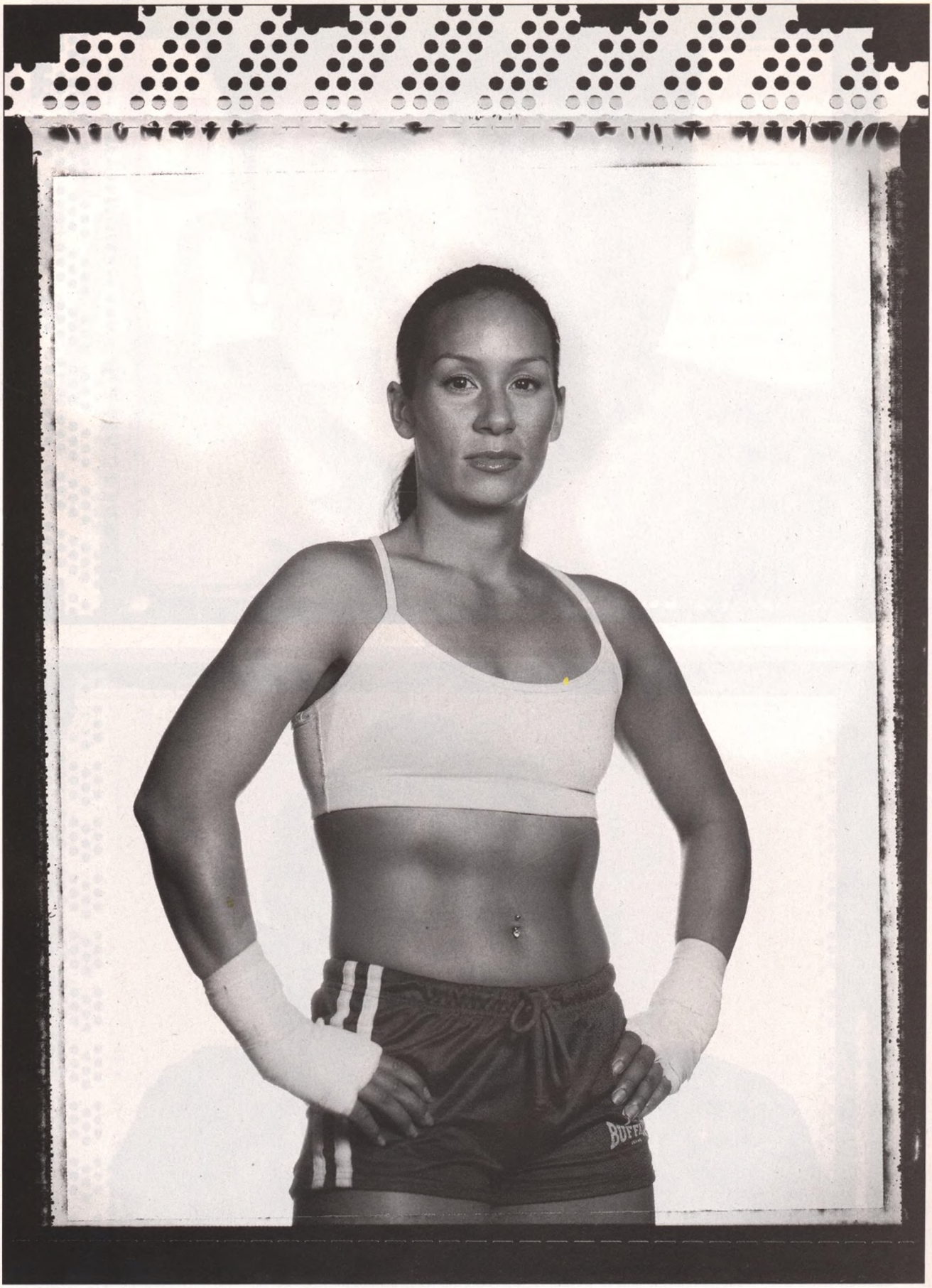
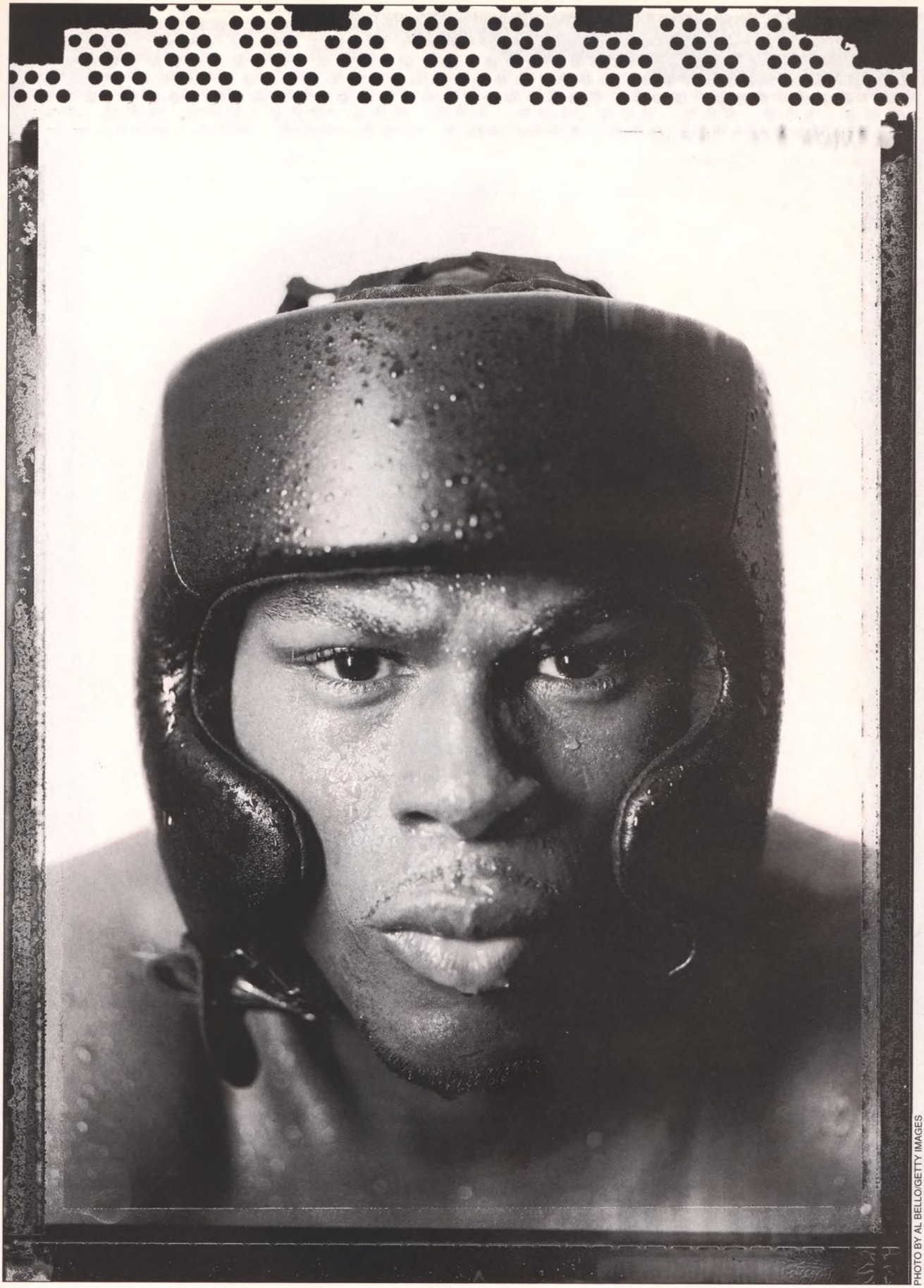


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Noriko Kariya



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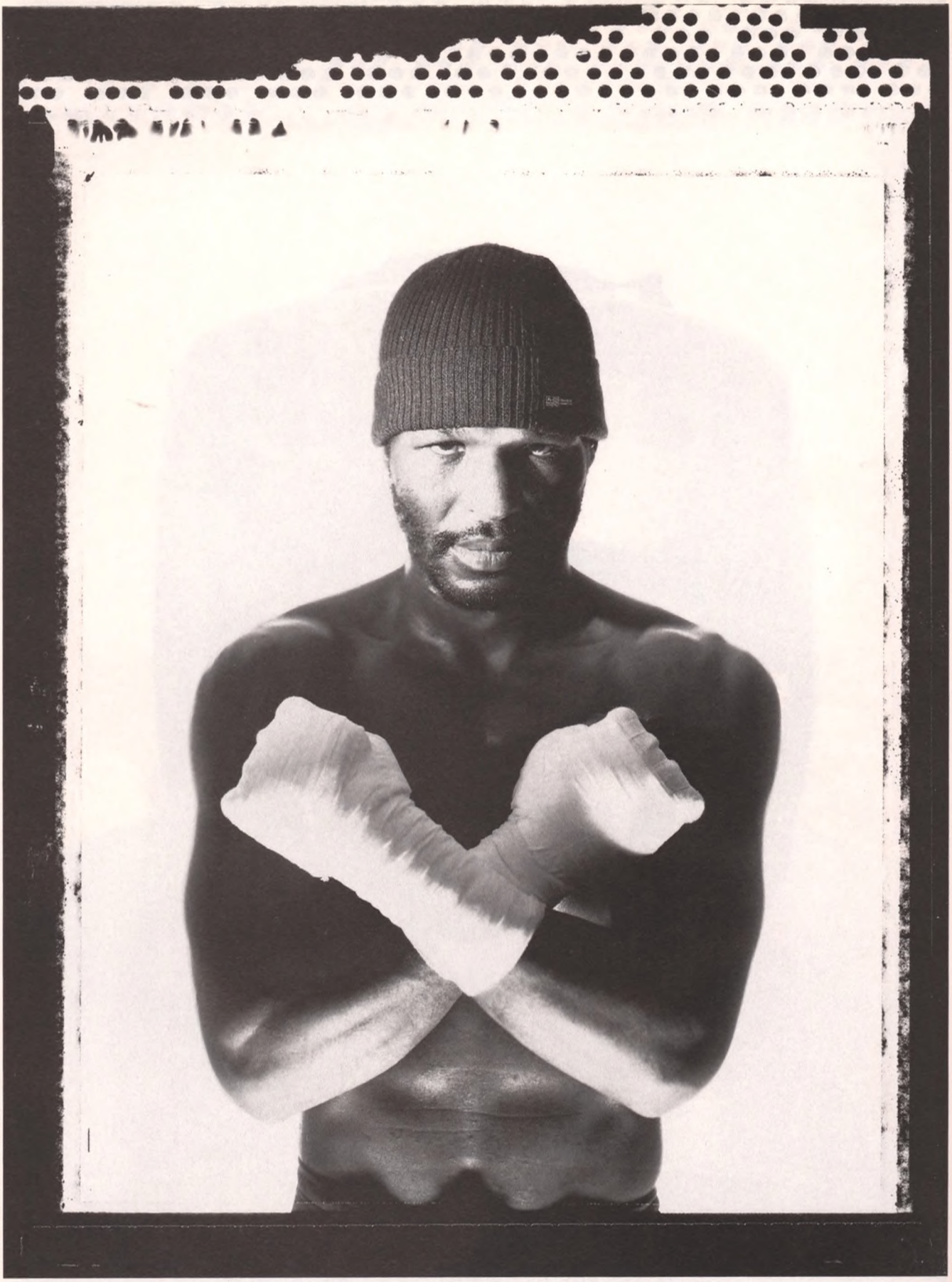
Jermain Taylor



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Bernard Hopkins

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Christy Martin

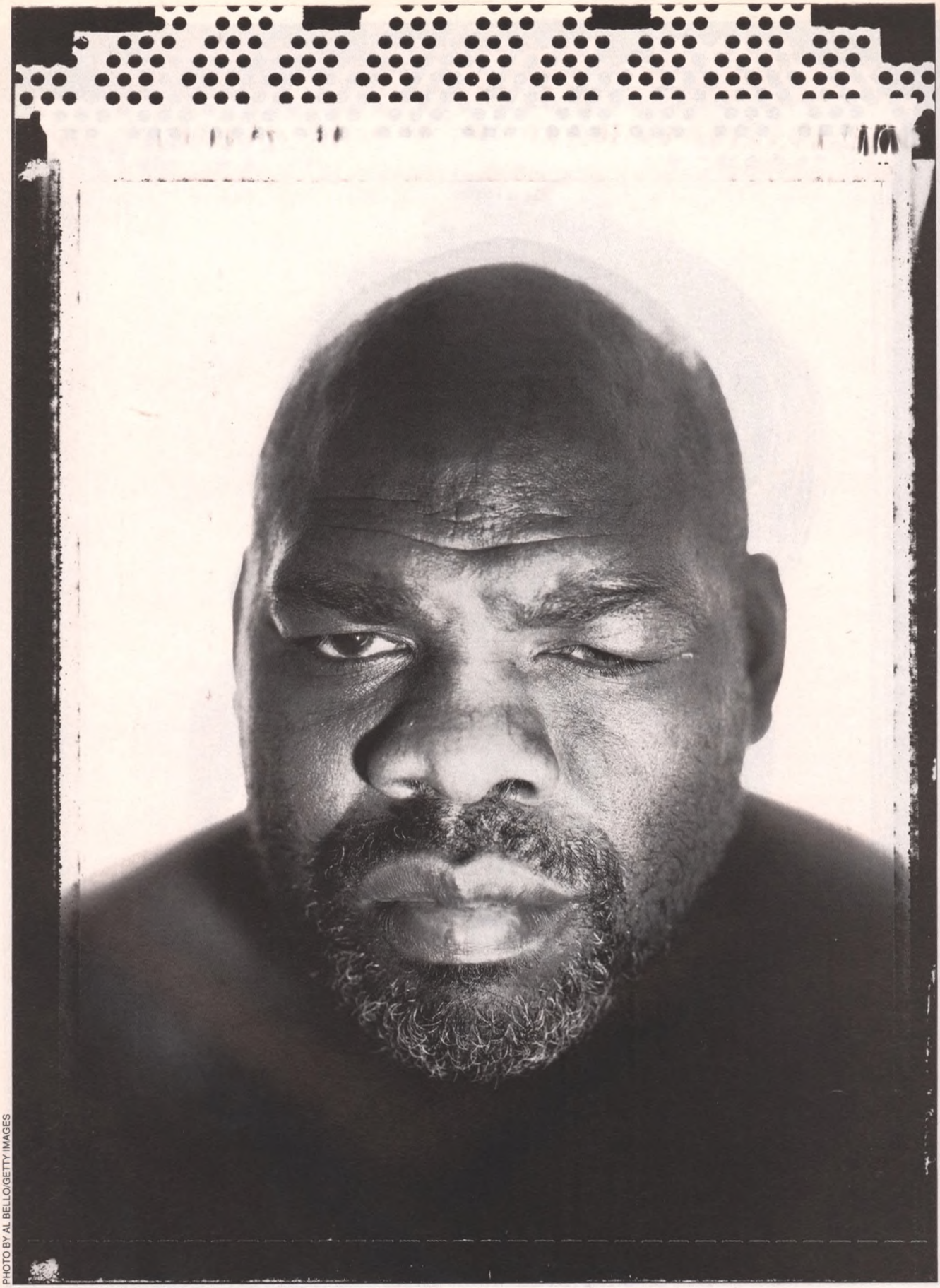
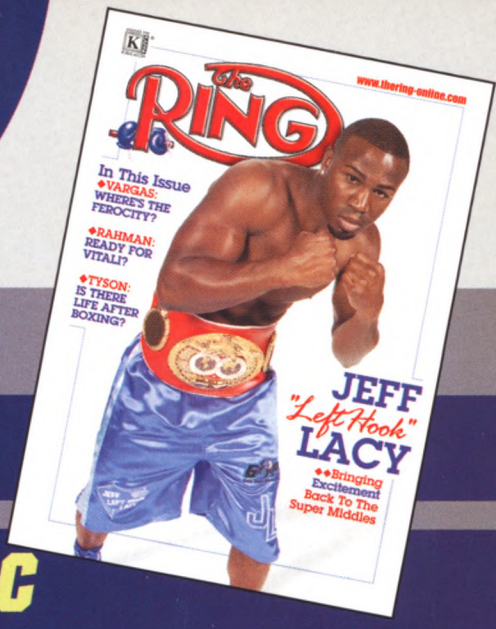


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Iran Barkley

The RING



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